

From New York to Moscow, Holocaust survivors share memories

By JEFFREY SCHAEFFER and ANGELA CHARLTON
Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — Holocaust survivors sang at Jerusalem's Western Wall, danced in Paris and lit candles in other cities to celebrate Hanukkah together, recalling Nazi horrors that Jewish community leaders fear are fading from the world's collective memory.

An 86-year-old man in Moscow described being forced by Nazi occupiers into a ghetto as a child. Elderly survivors in New York shared stories Sunday at the Museum of Jewish Heritage, in the shadow of the Statue of Liberty.



Continued on Page 3

Survivors of the Holocaust and others gather at the Museum of Jewish Heritage as the Statue of Liberty can be seen through a window of the museum Sunday, Dec. 22, 2019, in New York, as they recognize International Holocaust Survivors Night, one of several events held around the world.

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Top baby names in NYC were Liam, Emma in 2018, officials say

NEW YORK (AP) — The most popular baby names in New York City last year were Liam and Emma, according to data released by city health officials Monday. Of the babies born in New York City in 2018, there were 779 Liams and 501 Emmas, according to the city's Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's birth certificate records. The number of births in the city decreased from 117,013 in 2017 to 114,296 in 2018, according to the city's data. Liam has been the top name for boys since 2016, and Emma has been the top name for girls since 2017. Some New Yorkers opted for rarer names: There were a handful of girls named Ami-

nah, Ida and Zadie and boys called Bentley, Lucian and Warren. Nine of the top 10 boy names from 2017 remained on the list in 2018. Jayden was dropped from the 2018 list while Alexander was added as the tenth most popular name. Eight of the top girl names stayed on the top 10 list for 2018. Amelia and Chloe joined the list as the ninth and tenth most popular names in 2018 respectively.



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Continued from Front

They worry that today's youth in many countries don't recognize names of Nazi death camps, fall prey to anti-Semitic conspiracy theories, or don't realize that 6 million Jews were killed in Hitler's World War II extermination campaign.

Lighting the Hanukkah candelabra, France's chief rabbi, Haim Korsia, told survivors in Paris, "What you are, each of you, is exactly like the light. ... We will never put out the first flame. When we transmit the knowledge, your experience and when we transmit it to others, it takes nothing from us and it gives to others."

With folk dancing, festive songs and shared meals, the ceremonies Sunday and Monday also aimed to combat the solitude and other difficulties many survivors face in old age.

Some 400,000 Holocaust victims are estimated to still be alive, about half of them in Israel — and as many as 40% are living in poverty, said Ruediger Mahlo of the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany, which organized the events.

"We want to make this public in order to help them and in order that other people help them as well," he told The Associated Press.

With tears in their eyes, survivors sang Israel's national anthem together at the Western Wall, the holiest site in the world where Jews can pray. The mood turned joyous by the time

candles were lit, with survivors joining hands, dancing in circles and laughing.

"For me, the holiday of Hanukkah is a holiday of victory, and it's very important for me to see the light of victory," said Amnon Elkiev, a survivor originally from the Netherlands who came to the ceremony with his wife. Renowned Nazi hunter Serge Klarsfeld was among those attending a bitter-sweet ceremony in Paris, where young and old sang and prayed together.

Anna Sterman described being "hunted ... like mice" as a child near Lyon. Sarah Saragoussi, whose parents were deported to camps, said: "We thought they would come back nonetheless. We didn't think they were leaving to their deaths."

The gathering in New York included some 200 survivors, some wearing winter caps, others wearing kippas. Some smiled as they listened to speeches; others looked on pensively. They touched on recent anti-Semitic attacks in the U.S. and on concerns that younger generations of Americans know little about what they went through.

Hand-in-hand with a rabbi, survivor Mikhail Spektr said a prayer and lit a Hanukkah candelabra in Moscow. He then took the microphone and sang for members of Russia's Jewish community, accompanied by a fiddler and accordion player.

As a child when the war began, Spektr said, he didn't

realize what was going on. When the Nazis came, he recalled his grandfather telling him that they were "a civilized nation, they wouldn't do anything to us." But he and his family were taken to a ghetto on Ukraine's western edge and held there from 1941 until the Red Army liberated it in 1944.

"We were all sleeping on the floor. We lived on the territory (of the ghetto), isolated from the city by barbed wire. The entrance was guarded by Nazi soldiers and policemen," he said. "People who dared (to leave) were indeed shot."

Bearing witness is ever more important as survivors die out. French survivor Suzanne Bakon said, "We are doing everything while we are living so that (the memory) remains." □



A menorah is seen during an event named 'Survivors Night' in Paris, Monday, Dec. 23, 2019.

Associated Press

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House committee raises prospect of more impeachment articles

By ERIC TUCKER

WASHINGTON (AP) — The House Judiciary Committee held open the possibility Monday of recommending additional articles of impeachment against President Donald Trump as it pressed anew for the testimony of former White House counsel Don McGahn.

The committee wants a federal appeals court to order McGahn to testify as it examines potential obstruction of justice by the president during special counsel Robert Mueller's Russia investigation. The committee says McGahn's testimony could also be useful for any Senate impeachment trial.

A judge last month directed McGahn to comply with the House Judiciary Committee subpoena, and a Washington-based appeals court is scheduled to hear arguments Jan. 3. In a court filing Monday, lawyers for the committee said McGahn's testimony remains essential even though the House has already voted to impeach Trump on two charges related to his interactions



In this Feb. 22, 2018, file photo White House counsel Don McGahn speaks at the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC), at National Harbor, Md.

Associated Press

with Ukraine rather than on actions uncovered during Mueller's Russia probe.

"If McGahn's testimony produces new evidence supporting the conclusion that President Trump committed impeachable offenses that are not covered by the Articles approved by the House, the Committee will proceed accordingly — including, if necessary, by considering whether to recommend new articles of impeachment," lawyers for the Democratic-led committee wrote.

The committee also said McGahn's testimony is important for the committee's

oversight role of the FBI and the Justice Department, "including in determining whether those agencies are operating free from improper political interference."

Democrats on the Judiciary Committee subpoenaed McGahn well before the start this fall of an impeachment inquiry centered around Trump's request to Ukraine's president that he investigate Democratic rival Joe Biden and his son, as well as an unsubstantiated conspiracy theory alleging Ukraine's interference in the 2016 U.S. presidential election. □

U.S. allocates \$175 million in military aid to Baltics in 2020

HELSINKI (AP) — The United States has allocated \$175 million in military aid to the Baltic countries of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania for 2020, the Estonian defense ministry said Monday.

The three countries are NATO members and all of them border Russia.

The Estonian defense ministry said that along with \$125 million in general military aid, Washington has for the first time earmarked a separate \$50 million budget line to boost air defense capabilities of the three ex-Soviet republics — seen by many military experts a weak area in their current defense.

The overall aim of U.S. military aid to Tallinn, Riga and Vilnius is to strengthen "the deterrence and defense posture in the Baltic States including in the area of airspace and especially in the field of air defense," Estonian Defense Minister Juri Luik said in a statement.

The three Baltic nations, which joined NATO in 2004, are all staunch allies of Washington.

They have been highly wor-

ried over what they have perceived to be waning interest by U.S. President Donald Trump's administration in trans-Atlantic relations and NATO's joint defense commitment, particularly since Trump had earlier called the military alliance obsolete.

But Estonia sees the U.S. military aid as a sign that Washington's commitment to NATO and the Baltic states is strong.

"Our (U.S.) ally clearly confirms its commitment to (NATO's) collective defense on Europe's eastern flank," Luik said in a statement, referring to the financial aid.

As Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania have no fighter aircraft, NATO fighter jets are responsible for policing Baltic airspace on a four-month rotational basis from bases in Estonia and Lithuania. Luik stressed "the transition from (Baltic) air policing to air defense requires a common decision from all (NATO) allies, but the U.S. position and practical support are of great importance." □



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U.S. awards immigration detention contracts in California

SAN DIEGO (AP) — The Trump administration awarded billions of dollars in contracts for private companies to operate immigration detention centers in California — less than two weeks before a new state law takes effect to prohibit them.

Gov. Gavin Newsom signed a bill in October to ban contracts for for-profit prisons starting Jan. 1. Supporters hoped the law would force U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement to look elsewhere after current contracts expire.

However, a federal website posted long-term awards on Friday worth a combined \$6.8 billion for detention facilities in San Diego, Calexico, Adelanto and Bakersfield. The sites will house about 4,000 detainees, with capacity to expand in the future.

ICE said the contracts were not subject to the new state law, deflecting criticism that the timing was meant to circumvent it.

Paige Hughes, an agency spokeswoman, said ICE believed the new contracts will limit transfers of detainees outside California, where they would be farther from family, friends and legal representatives. "State laws aimed at obstructing federal law enforcement are inappropriate and harmful," Hughes said.

The governor's office had no immediate comment when contacted Monday. When he signed the bill, Newsom said private prisons contribute to excessive incarceration, including of immigrants and asylum-seekers.

"These for-profit prisons do not reflect our values," he

said at the time.

A state Senate analysis of Assembly 32 said the Trump administration would likely sue to block the law, partly by arguing that is preempted by federal immigration law. The analysis predicted the state would prevail in court.

The GEO Group Inc. won two five-year extensions — one to operate the detention center in Adelanto, with capacity for 2,690 beds, and another to run the facility in Bakersfield, with capacity for 1,800 beds. The two contracts are worth more than \$3.7 billion,

GEO said Monday the contracts would provide more than \$200 million in annual revenue and 1,200 jobs.

CoreCivic Inc. won an extension worth \$2.1 billion to operate an immigration detention center in San



In this Aug. 28, 2019, file photo, the Adelanto U.S. Immigration and Enforcement Processing Center operated by GEO Group, Inc. (GEO), a Florida-based company specializing in privatized corrections, is viewed in Adelanto, Calif.

Associated Press

Diego, with capacity for 1,994 beds. Management & Training Corp. won a contract for \$679 million to operate a facility in Calexico with capacity for 704 beds.

California, with its large immigrant populations and

border with Mexico, is a major priority for ICE, which has found itself increasingly unwelcome under state laws. As the number of ICE detainees nationwide topped 56,000 earlier this year, the agency held more people in central Louisiana. □

Virginia pastors give over \$17,000 to pay student meal debts

STAFFORD, Va. (AP) — The holidays came early for some Virginia families struggling to pay school lunch debt.

Three Virginia pastors used more than \$17,000 from their church's budget to pay off meal debt at two local school systems.

"It seemed like a good idea, (but) we didn't know if there was a need because no one ever seems to talk about this," said the Rev. Jerry Williams, a pas-

tor at Mount Ararat Baptist Church. "So we called the school systems. And gosh, wow, was there a need."

Williams, the Rev. Brian Bennett and the Rev. Andrew Segre gave \$10,500 to Stafford County Public Schools and close to \$7,000 to Spotsylvania County Public Schools, which wiped out balances across the district, news outlets reported. Keana Butler, principal of Park Ridge Elementary School in Stafford, said she

was skeptical when the pastors emailed her about students' meal debt. She said usually parent-teacher groups and members of her own staff pay out of pocket to help reduce the debt.

"I was overwhelmed by the generosity," Butler said.

About 75% of schools districts nationally reported unpaid meal debt, with the median amount per school being about \$2,500, according to The Washington Post, which cited the

national School Nutrition Association. The median amount of unpaid debt increased 70% from the 2012-2013 school year. The Washington Post reported students across Washington, D.C., Maryland and Virginia owe nearly a \$500,000 in meal debt. The Post also reported that although the National School Lunch Program allows some students to get free or reduced-price meals, many families who barely fail to qualify

for federal aid still struggle to pay for school breakfast and lunch five days a week. Williams said neither he nor the other pastors were aware of the meal debt statistics. They intend to pay off the debt again. He said he hopes their actions bring more awareness to the growing debt.

"This is not a churchy thing," Williams said. "This — helping children and families — this is a thing that anyone can do." □

Gender gap opens among Hispanics who could be key in 2020

By **NICHOLAS RICCARDI**
COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo.

(AP) — Yolanda Avila and Andres Pico are friends who sit next to each other on the Colorado Springs' city council. But politically the two couldn't be further apart — Avila is a durable Democrat and Pico an unflinching Republican.

It's a split that's common across the country, as Hispanics are divided along gender lines. Overall, Latinos are far more likely to be Democrats than Republicans, but Hispanic men are more likely than Hispanic women to vote Republican.

Last year, as about two-thirds of Latinos backed Democrats, Hispanic women were 9 percentage points more likely to vote for them than Hispanic men, according to AP VoteCast, a national survey of more than 115,000 midterm voters, including 7,738 Latinos. Though Hispanics started from a more Democratic baseline — 61% of men still backed that party's candidates in 2018 — the gender divide in the group was comparable to



In this Friday, Dec. 13, 2019, photograph, Colorado Springs, Colo., council members Yolanda Avila and Andres Pico are shown in a city office in Colorado Springs, Colo.

Associated Press

the split among white men and women.

Data from Pew Research Center shows the gap has widened since 2012.

"You do see the Latino population reflect the same divides as among the U.S. population as a whole," said Mark Hugo Lopez of the Pew Hispanic Center.

"All these pieces begin to tell a story of integration."

The emerging divide highlights the complexity of what is now the nation's largest minority group before a presidential election where immigration and identity will be core issues.

President Donald Trump is hoping that his inroads

among Hispanics will help him win the pivotal swing state of Florida, and possibly provide enough support to threaten Democrats in states like New Mexico and Nevada. Still, the gender gap has traditionally helped Democrats because women are more likely to vote than men, so that party benefits more from its disproportionate support among women.

Over the past two decades, immigrants from Latin America have increasingly been women, often bringing children north, sometimes trying to rejoin partners who left earlier, when Latin American immigration to the United States was predominantly male. Newer arrivals in the country are more likely to vote Democratic when they attain citizenship.

Additionally, Hispanic women have become more likely to earn college degrees than their male counterparts.

"Latinas have a much more positive relationship with U.S. institutions like schools," said Jessica Lavariega Monforti, a dean at California Lutheran University who has studied the Latino gender gap and noted Hispanic men have higher rates of incarceration. "For Latino men in particular, and for a lesser extent Latinas, this

is about wrapping yourself up in American identity, wrapping yourself in the flag," she said of men supporting the GOP.

Trump, and his alpha-male projection of masculinity, also has appeal. "There is a certain 'manliness' that comes with being part of the Republican Party" now, Monforti said.

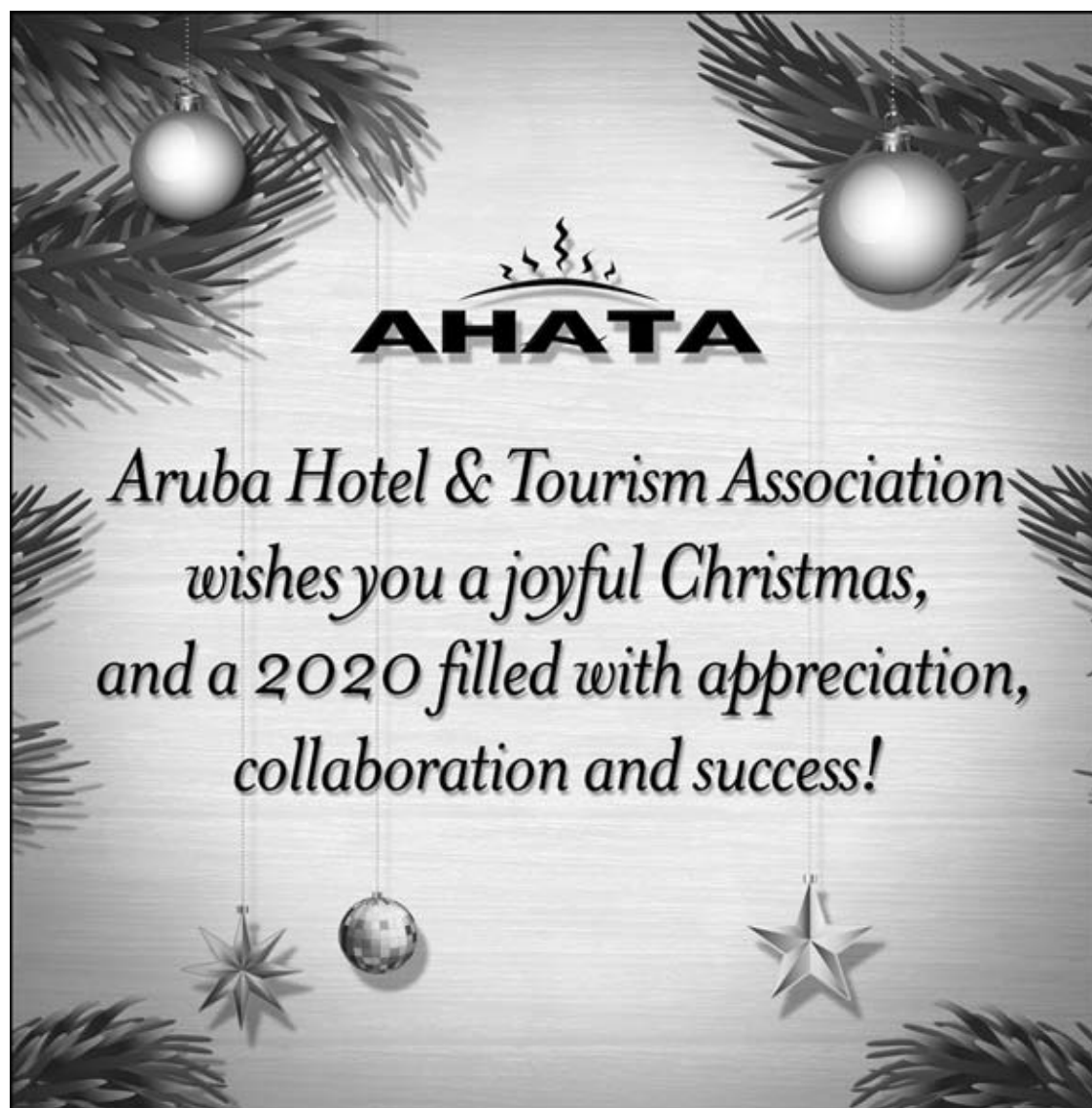
In Las Vegas, Jesus Marquez, a Trump-supporting talk radio host, says he notices that people backing the president who call into his Spanish-language show lean male. He said there's been considerable social pressure for Latinos of all genders not to admit to backing Trump.

"Males might be a little more outspoken on that," Marquez said. Jacqueline Armendariz, a Democratic organizer, has seen the gender gap among Latinos firsthand while working for an abortion rights group along the Texas border. The group was almost all Hispanic women. "A man can feel the luxury of feeling that's not related to their own life-and-death situation," Armendariz said of abortion rights.

Armendariz noted that, in today's polarized political world, voters are constantly being forced to choose sides. "Is machismo a factor? Maybe," she said. "For that to translate into what we see in voting data right now doesn't surprise me."

The split is evident among the handful of elected Hispanic officials in Colorado Springs, a conservative city 70 miles south of Denver. The three elected Republicans in the county are all men — Pico, county commissioner Longinos Gonzalez and a state legislator, Dave Williams. Avila, for whom Armendariz once worked, is the only Democrat and only woman.

Pico, 68, has considered himself a Republican ever since he joined the military decades ago. "I always found conservatives would find a way to solve a problem and Democrats would find a way to feel good about it," the retired Naval flight officer said. □



Baba Ram Dass, spiritual guru and LSD pioneer, dies at 88

MAUI, Hawaii (AP) — Baba Ram Dass, the 1960s counterculture spiritual leader who experimented with LSD and traveled to India to find enlightenment, returning to share it with Americans, has died. He was 88. Dass' foundation, Love Serve Remember, announced late Sunday that the author and spiritual leader died peacefully at his home earlier in the day. No cause of death was given.

He had suffered a severe stroke in 1997 that left him paralyzed on the right side and, for a time, unable to speak. More recently, he underwent hip surgery after he was injured in a fall in November 2008, according to his website.

"I had really thought about checking out, but your love and your prayers convinced me not to do it. ... It's just beautiful," he told followers in a videotaped message at the time from his hospital bed in Hawaii. Over the years, Ram Dass — born Richard Alpert — associated with the likes of Timothy Leary and Allen Ginsberg. He wrote about his experiences with drugs, set up projects to help prisoners and those facing terminal illness and sought to enlighten others about the universal struggle with aging.

But he was best known for the 1971 "Be Here Now," written after his trip to India. The spiritual primer found its way into thousands of backpacks around the world.

"I want to share with you the parts of the internal journey that never get written up in the mass media ...," he wrote. "I'm not interested in what you read in the Saturday Evening Post about LSD. This is the story of what goes on inside a human being who is undergoing all these experiences."

Among his other books were "How Can I Help?" and "Compassion in Action" and "Still Here: Embracing Aging, Changing, and Dying."

"In the 60s, I was an uncle for a movement," he told The Associated Press in 1998. "I was always showing people where they could go. I went east, and then there was a big movement east."

Now, he said, "the baby boomers are getting old — and I'm learning how to get old for them. That's my role."

The Boston-born son of a prominent attorney, Ram Dass entered the public sphere in the early 1960s as a young Harvard psychology professor. Alpert, as he was then known, earned a doctorate at Stanford University.

He and Leary, a Harvard colleague, began a series of experiments with hallucinogenic mushrooms and LSD, giving the drugs to prisoners, philosophers and students to study their effects. Ram Dass later wrote that he tried psilocybin, the compound found in hallucinogenic mushrooms, in Leary's living room.

"I peered into the semidarkness and recognized none other than myself in cap and gown and hood," he wrote. "It was as if that part of me, which was a Harvard professor, had separated or dissociated itself from me."

The experiments got him and Leary kicked out of Harvard in 1963.

"It was a little too sensational," Ram Dass said in 1998. "We were the starters of it." He and Leary retreated to an upstate New York mansion that drew Beat Generation figures Ginsberg, William Burroughs and Jack Kerouac.

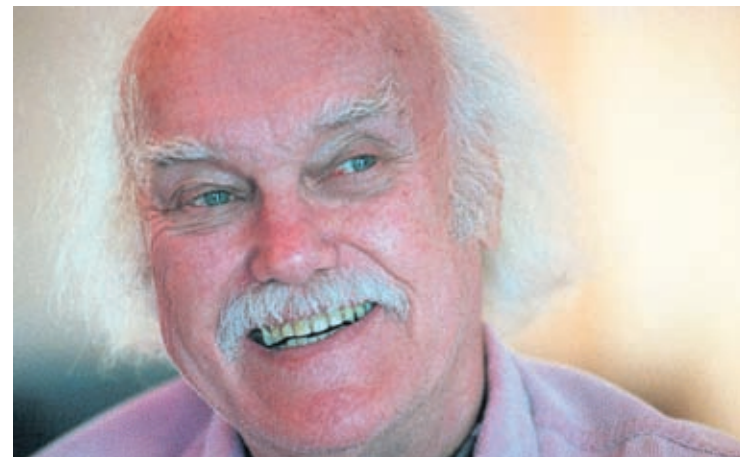
By the late 1960s, LSD and other hallucinogens had become part of pop culture and a rite of passage for many young Americans. But Alpert eventually sought a way to reach a state of enlightenment without drugs. Following Ginsberg's advice, he headed to India in 1967, where he met the man who became his guru, Neem Karoli Baba.

There, his guru introduced

him to yoga, meditation, Buddhism and Sufism, and gave him the name Ram Dass, Hindi for "servant of God." (He is often called Baba Ram Dass; "baba" is an honorary title.)

Ram Dass wrote "Be Here Now" when he returned to the United States. Around the same time, he told The New York Times that he had turned away from drugs, saying: "I don't want to break the law, since that leads to fear and paranoia."

In 1974, Ram Dass founded the Hanuman Foundation, which set up programs such as the Prison Ashram Project to introduce inmates to spirituality. He also



In this Oct. 21, 1998 file photo, Ram Dass, best known for the 1971 bestseller "Be Here Now," smiles during an interview at his San Anselmo, Calif., home.

Associated Press

helped create the Seva Foundation, which works to prevent blindness and helps community groups in developing countries. His Love Serve Remember Foundation is dedication to preserving his teachings and those of Neem Karoli Baba.

Ram Dass lived for many

years in the quiet town of San Anselmo, Calif., about 20 miles (32 kilometers) north of San Francisco, surrounded by the markers of his life straddling East and West: Japanese prints and statues of Buddha, seashells from the South Pacific and a well-used player piano. □

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Holiday blues: French strikes hit Christmas shopping season

By **NICOLAS GARRIGA**
ANGELA CHARLTON

PARIS (AP) — Last year, it was the yellow vest protests. This year, it's the strikes that have crippled Paris. The Christmas holidays aren't proving to be a lucrative - or indeed merry - time for boutiques in the capital.

Or, for that matter, oyster vendors. Or hotels, or cafes. Decorative lights still shimmer along the French capital's glamorous avenues and illuminate its breathtaking monuments, but that's not enough to bring back the business that retailers have lost since train drivers and others went on strike Dec. 5.

Monday marked Day 19 of the strikes over President Emmanuel Macron's plans to redesign the national pension system, which unions see as a threat to the French welfare system and way of life.

A wildcat protest by union activists Monday disrupted traffic on one of only two Paris subway lines that's been functioning normally — and prevented shop-



A striking train worker holds a box to collect funds for striking workers in front of riot police officers outside the Gare de Lyon train station, Monday, Dec. 23, 2019 in Paris.

pers from reaching the shopping mecca along the Champs-Élysées.

Those driving to the capital to shop sometimes face hours of traffic, and battles or long waits for scarce parking spots.

"It's very difficult. I usually go the Galeries Lafayette several times, walk through Paris to buy things, but this

time I gave that up," said Marie Lesage, a 32-year-old Parisian.

So she decided to shop online or in little boutiques close to work.

Overall estimates of retail losses vary, but they're hitting across the board. Toy stores, florists and foie gras sellers. Train station cafes, brasseries or burger shops.

The Paris government is offering 2.5 million euros in tax breaks to city merchants, and the central government is offering to delay 400 million euros in tax payments until next year. But the Paris region Chamber of Commerce says that's not enough.

The chamber estimates retail sales in central Paris are

down 30% from last year. Galeries Lafayette alone registered a 50% drop in sales the first day of the strike, it said.

Pascal Bouaziz, owner of a high-end electronics shop in the tony 8th district of Paris, estimates sales are down a third from a normal December.

"We are in a business neighborhood, so people finish work ... and usually during the holiday season they come in, they buy their products and they calmly return home. But now they're scared to miss their train, so at 5 p.m. they're running to get home," he told The Associated Press. "We understand them. Because of this, we have fewer customers than usual."

Some shops struggle to stay open because their own employees can't get to work.

Online deliveries are sometimes delayed by tangled traffic — a problem that's making last-minute shoppers nervous the day before Christmas Eve, when French families often exchange gifts. □

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Putin opens railway bridge to Crimea

MOSCOW (AP) — Russian President Vladimir Putin on Monday inaugurated a massive railway bridge to Crimea, which Russia annexed from Ukraine in 2014. Putin rode a commuter train for the opening of the 19-kilometer (11.9-mile) bridge, which is the longest in Europe.

The \$3.6-billion project is intended to bolster links between Russia and Crimea by increasing the transport of cargo and encouraging the flow of tourists.

Putin congratulated construction workers on completing the bridge, saying that "it has proven our ability to carry out large-scale infrastructure projects."

He said that 14 million passengers and about 13 million tons of cargo are expected to move across the

bridge next year.

While passenger traffic across the bridge was launched Monday, cargo trains will start rolling across it next July, said Transport Minister Yevgeny Ditrikh.

Russia annexed Crimea in March 2014 on the grounds that the residents of the peninsula voted to join up with Russia. The move has met with widespread international censure, including U.S. and EU sanctions on Russia.

Ukraine has also blocked shipment of supplies via its territory to Crimea, and a ferry crossing from Russian Black Sea ports is often interrupted by gales. Car traffic across a parallel bridge for cars across the Kerch Strait between the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov opened in May 2018. □

Germany argues over migrant children on Greek islands

Associated Press

BERLIN (AP)— German government officials are rejecting an opposition leader's call for the country unilaterally to take in migrant children stuck in overcrowded camps on Greek islands. Robert Habeck, a co-leader of the Green party, said in an interview with Sunday's Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung newspaper that "it is an imperative of humanity to help quickly" and get some 4,000 children out of the camps.

He noted that some German states have said they're ready to help. Asked whether Germany should go ahead even if other European countries don't also take in migrants, he replied: "Yes. In any case, everyone will never join in."

But government officials made clear that they don't want to let other European countries, many of which have been reluctant to take in any migrants, off the hook.

Government spokeswoman Ulrike Demmer said Monday that Germany wants to help improve the living conditions of all concerned, but added: "We are seeking a European solution for the future, and Germany can't do that unilaterally."

Gerd Mueller, the development aid minister, told the Passauer Neue Presse newspaper that "the chil-

dren can and must best be helped on the spot."

Under a 2016 deal between the European Union and Turkey to stop migrant flows into Europe, those who arrive on Greek islands from the nearby Turkish coast are held in island camps pending deportation unless they successfully apply for asylum in Greece.

The deal, coupled with an

increase in new arrivals since the summer, has led to deteriorating conditions in overcrowded camps on the eastern Aegean islands.

Greece's 6-month-old government has vowed to move about 20,000 people off the islands and into other migrant and refugee facilities on the mainland by early 2020. □



In this Monday, Oct. 28, 2019 file photo Green party co-chairman Robert Habeck addresses the media during a press conference in Berlin, Germany.

Associated Press

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Saudi sentences 5 to death for Jamal Khashoggi's killing

By **ABDULLAH AL-SHIHRI**
AYA BATRAWY
 Associated Press
RIYADH, Saudi Arabia (AP)

— A court in Saudi Arabia on Monday sentenced five people to death for the killing of Washington Post columnist Jamal Khashoggi, who was murdered in the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul last year by a team of Saudi agents.

Saudi Arabia's state-run Al-Ekhbariya TV channel reported that three others were sentenced to prison. All can appeal the verdicts. The Saudi crown prince, Mohammed bin Salman, had drawn international condemnation for the killing because several Saudi agents involved worked directly for him. The kingdom denies that Prince Mohammed had any involvement or knowledge of the operation.

State TV also reported the Saudi attorney general's investigation showed that the crown prince's for-



In this Dec. 15, 2014, file photo, Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi speaks during a news conference in Manama, Bahrain.

Associated Press

mer top adviser, Saud al-Qahtani, had no proven involvement in the killing. Al-Qahtani, however, has been sanctioned by the United States for his alleged

role in the operation. The court also ruled that the Saudi consul-general in Istanbul at the time, Mohammed al-Otaibi, was not guilty. He was released

from prison after the verdicts were announced, according to state TV.

After holding nine sessions, the trial concluded that there was no previous in-

tent by those found guilty to murder, according to state TV.

The trials of the accused were carried out in near total secrecy, though a handful of diplomats, including from Turkey, as well as members of Khashoggi's family were allowed to attend the sessions. In total, 11 people were on trial for Khashoggi's death in the kingdom.

The verdicts were read by Shaalan al-Shaalan, a spokesperson from the attorney general's office, and broadcast on state TV. No names were given for those found guilty. The attorney general's office also said it is looking into the verdicts, which were issued by Riyadh's criminal court, to see whether to move ahead in the appellate court.

The three suspects in the case who face prison time were sentenced to a total of 24 years, but no individual breakdown for each person was given. □

Poor air quality keeps schools closed in Iran's capital



Thick smog blankets the skyline obscuring nearby mountains in Tehran, Iran, Monday, Dec. 23, 2019.

Associated Press

By **NASSER KARIMI**
TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — Dangerously poor air quality forced Iran's government on Monday to extend school closures in the capital Tehran, a city home to over 10 million people. Schools have been closed since Saturday and will remain shut until Wednesday, the end of Iran's workweek, according to the official IRNA news agency.

Nearby mountains were completely obscured by the a thick layer of air pollution called an inver-

sion that's been hovering over the capital since last month.

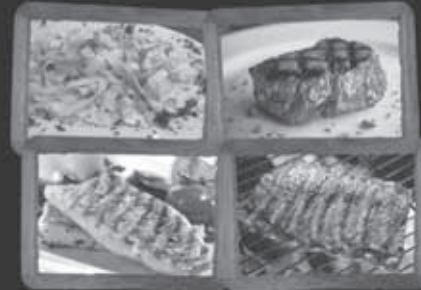
The smog is mostly caused by heavy traffic as well as factory pollution, according to Tehran's provincial governor. It's been worsened by a lack of wind and rain.

Tehran's air is among the most polluted in the world. Similar school closures were in effect in other cities as well. Still, despite the pollution, many students seemed to be enjoying their extended vacation,

according to one school-teacher in Tehran, Maryam Lavasani.

But the smog doesn't only affect children. Zahra Ali-pour, a 60-year-old homemaker with a chronic lung condition, told The Associated Press that she has trouble just going outside.

"Breathing is really difficult for me. What can I do? If I don't leave home, how can I take care of my daily jobs? And when I come out of the house, the air pollution really hurts me," she said. □

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China, South Korea look to improve ties with Beijing summit

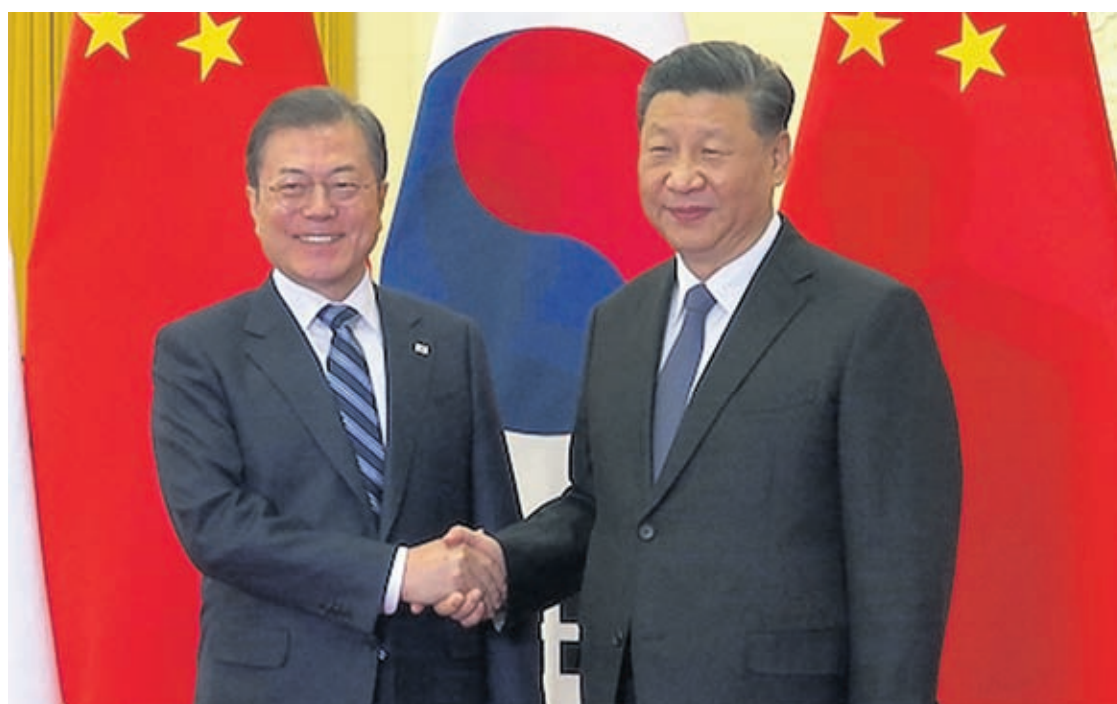
Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — The leaders of South Korea and China said Monday that they look forward to improved ties following a protracted disagreement over the deployment of a U.S. anti-missile system that Beijing considers a threat.

South Korean President Moon Jae-in told Chinese leader Xi Jinping that while the sides may have felt "disappointed toward each other for a while," their shared culture and history prevented them from becoming completely estranged.

"It is hoped that South Korea's dream becomes helpful for China as China's dream becomes an opportunity for South Korea," Moon said in opening remarks before reporters were ushered from the room.

In his opening comments at



In this image from video, South Korean President Moon Jae-in, left, shakes hands with his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping as they pose for photographers ahead of their meeting at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, Monday, Dec. 23, 2019.

Associated Press

the meeting at the Great Hall of the People in the center of Beijing, Xi described bilateral ties as "a

substantial relationship in the world and an influential relationship among world nations."

Ties between the northeastern neighbors nosedived in 2017 after Seoul accepted the emplacement of the

Terminal High Altitude Area Defense, or THAAD, system in southern South Korea. Beijing insists its real purpose is to use its powerful radars to peer deep into its territory, rather than to warn of North Korean missile launches and shoot them down.

Furious at being snubbed, China launched an unofficial boycott of everything from Chinese tour group visits to South Korea to South Korean television shows, boy bands and other cultural products. Major South Korean retailer Lotte, which provided a golf course where the missile system was deployed, was singled out for especially harsh treatment and its China business operations were essentially destroyed. Even sales of ubiquitous South Korean auto brands such as Hyundai and Kia plunged for months. □

New construction seen at missile-related site in North Korea

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) —

A new satellite image of a factory where North Korea makes military equipment used to launch long-range missiles shows the construction of a new structure. The release of several images from Planet Labs comes amid concern that North Korea could launch a rocket or missile as it seeks concessions in stalled nuclear negotiations with the United States.

North Korea has warned that what "Christmas gift" it gives the U.S. depends on what action Washington

takes.

One of the satellite images taken on Dec. 19 shows the completion of a new structure at the March 16 Factory near Pyongyang, where North Korea is believed to be developing and manufacturing vehicles used as mobile launchers for long-range ballistic missiles.

Jeffrey Lewis, director of the East Asia nonproliferation program at the Middlebury Institute, said in an email that the construction seemed to be an expansion of the factory, which would be "big news."

North Korea used what appeared to be vehicles imported from China during its three flight tests of the Hwasong-14 and -15 intercontinental ballistic missiles in 2017, Lewis said. An increased capacity to produce mobile launchers would potentially help expand North Korea's ICBM force and improve its survivability during nuclear conflict. "As far as I know, North Korea only imported eight of those vehicles," Lewis said about the vehicles the North used during the 2017 tests. □



This Dec. 19, 2019, satellite image from Planet Lab Inc., that has been analyzed by experts at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies, shows the March 16 Factory in Pyongsong, near Pyongyang, where North Korea manufactures military trucks used as mobile launchers for long-range missiles.

Associated Press

Buzz over Venezuela's Guaidó fades as Maduro holds firm

By SCOTT SMITH

Associated Press

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP)

— Tour operator Alejandro Palacios joined hundreds of thousands of Venezuelans protesting in the streets early this year, wanting to believe that things would finally change in the country as upstart opposition leader Juan Guaidó rallied international support and promised a swift end to President Nicolás Maduro's rule.

To Palacios, Guaidó seemed different from the string of past opposition leaders who had challenged Maduro and his predecessor, the late Hugo Chavez, over 20 years of increasingly authoritarian socialist rule.

The United States and dozens of nations had thrown their support behind the youthful congressional leader, recognizing him as the country's legitimate president, arguing that Maduro's re-election was invalidated by fraud and a ban on most opponents.

And there seemed to be signs that the military might heed Guaidó's repeated calls for soldiers to abandon Maduro. A few joined him in the streets in a quickly quelled uprising. The U.S. and other nations sent caravans of aid to Venezuela's borders to be distributed by Guaidó's backers, and they were put in charge of many Venezuelan embassies and assets abroad.

Then February turned to March, and the months marched by. No international aid made it through Maduro's blockade. The military stayed loyal. Even the nation's catastrophic economy began to improve slightly. Maduro remains in power.

"Here we are today, like nothing ever happened," said a disillusioned Palacios, 26, who has watched many relatives pack up and leave in desperation while he stayed behind to care for his parents living on a government pension constantly shrinking under the world's highest inflation. Palacios no longer answers the opposition leader's call



In this Dec. 16, 2019 photo, Venezuela's National Assembly President and self-proclaimed interim President Juan Guaidó speaks during an interview with the Associated Press in Caracas, Venezuela.

Associated Press

to protest, nor do most of the others who once filled the streets.

Cracks have even appeared in Guaidó's base of support in the National Assembly, the only major institution controlled by the opposition. His re-election as congressional president is no longer assured and legislators' official terms expire in a few months.

Throughout, the 36-year-old Guaidó has admitted no mistakes, and neither he nor his backers in Washington have offered a fresh strategy to rescue their floundering battle to unseat Maduro. The Trump administration has continued to pile economic and travel sanctions onto members of Maduro's inner circle, but so far with little effect.

"We're up against a dictatorship," Guaidó said in an interview with The Associated Press. "I think that is central."

Guaidó said he remains focused on winning over the military, the linchpin of support for Maduro, and he dismissed the idea of further negotiations with the socialist administration — talks his side says Maduro has used to defuse protests without making concessions.

He also said he favors boycotting legislative elections

in 2020 as long as the electoral board running the vote remains packed with Maduro loyalists.

Still, Guaidó insists his domestic and international support will only grow.

Guaidó, the hand-picked successor to then-detained opposition leader Leopoldo López, leaped onto the stage last January at a dark moment in the once-wealthy nation's history. Despite sitting atop the world's largest proven oil reserves, gasoline shortages plague the nation, most homes don't have reliable drinking water or electricity and there are shortages of food, medicine and spare parts.

Roughly 4.5 million people have left the country, figures that rival mass migration from war-torn Syria.

Seizing on the nation's desperation, Guaidó drew masses into the streets 11 months ago when he claimed to be Venezuela's legitimate interim president after congress declared Maduro's re-election illegal. The bold move overnight turned Guaidó into the nation's most-popular politician since Chavez burst onto the political scene in the early 1990s. More than 60% of Venezuelans viewed him favorably in February, according to Caracas-based polling firm Datanalysis,

with many believing he would rid them of Maduro within three months.

"Guaidó became the outsider that people were looking for to face Maduro," said Datanalysis' president Luis Vicente Leon. "A kind of hope formed around him."

Today that support has sunk by 20 percentage points, said Leon, a sign that Venezuelans are starting to think that removing Maduro from power may be impossible.

Maduro, whose approval ratings in the other polls have dipped closer to 10%, has proven more resilient than many expected.

Venezuela's oil production has inched up for the second consecutive month after crashing to a seven-decade low under U.S. sanctions, and shoppers are increasingly pulling U.S. dollars from their wallets — a sign the economy is bouncing back, or at least stabilizing, due in part to an easing of currency controls that the government had earlier resisted.

Maduro also appeals to many Venezuelans who still mistrust an opposition seen as corrupt and elitist and who honor the memory of Chavez, who died before the economic collapse hit home.

Vice President Delcy Ro-

driguez declared the "attempted coup d'etat" led by President Donald Trump a failure as she spoke last week to the National Constituent Assembly, a body the government created to bypass the opposition-dominated congress.

"They don't understand what's happening within Venezuela," Rodriguez said. "They follow Hollywood scripts but don't have an ending our political project."

Maduro has agreed to several rounds of negotiations over the years, including some sponsored by the Vatican and the government of Norway that raised hopes of a breakthrough to the political crisis, only to have them fall apart.

Accelerating the opposition's downfall have been revelations of corruption.

The National Assembly that Guaidó heads has suspended seven opposition lawmakers — three of them from Guaidó's Popular Will party — who are accused of lobbying on behalf of businessmen who were under investigation both in Venezuela and the U.S. for allegedly defrauding Maduro's landmark food subsidy program.

In January, the National Assembly must decide whether to extend Guaidó's tenure, and he said he is confident he has the backing to be re-elected as assembly president. Analysts say appointing any alternative would be devastating for the opposition.

Adding to his obstacles, Maduro's government has stepped up its campaign to undermine the opposition, offering large bribes to lawmakers to vote against Guaidó, Elliott Abrams, the U.S. special envoy to Venezuela, told reporters in Washington on Friday.

Maduro's government also recently charged four opposition lawmakers with treason and rebellion, bringing to roughly 32 the number of legislators who have been detained, forced into exile or had their constitutional immunity from prosecution revoked. □

LOCAL



Christmas Lights

ORANJESTAD — Christmas in Aruba would not be complete without a visit to see the Christmas Lights around the island. By just driving around on the main roads you can enjoy a variety of creativity with colorful lights being displayed on various Aruban homes. Also the majority of the roundabouts are decorated.

If you are lucky enough you might hear Christmas carols and "gaitas" at any of these locations but also at the malls and stores. Gaita is a style of Venezuelan folk music from Maracaibo in Zulia State. It is possibly derived from gaites, the Gothic word for goat, the animal whose skin generally is used for the membrane of the furro instrument (kind of tambura with stick). Other instruments used in gaita include maracas, cuatro, charrasca and tambora (Venezuelan drum). Song themes range from humorous and love songs to protest songs. The local gaita bands are composed mostly of a group of ladies who sing with angelic voices while they dance in a choreographic manner.

The map shown here will give you an overview of the most popular decorated places around the island. So hop into your car or call a taxi driver to go around and enjoy the spectacular Christmas scenes. We wish you a wonderful Christmas. ☐



Aruba to Me



ORANJESTAD – Aruba Today likes to welcome readers to participate in our newspaper. You can see that in our Honored Guest-publications, specials like on Valentine's Day and on other occasions. Throughout the year you are always welcome to send us your vacation picture(s) together with completing the sentence: Aruba to me is (Email: news@arubatoday.com)

For today's newspaper we received a great picture from **Maggie Kinney** from Hoosick Falls, NY. She wrote to us:

Aruba to me is.... JOY!

Happy Holidays Maggie and family from all of us at Aruba Today!

CHRISTMAS UNDER THE STARS AT RENAISSANCE ISLAND

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PascoanAruban Christmas story of faith

EpisodeXLVIII - 49

ORANJESTAD — At the beginning of December's nights we live the magic of Pasco in Aruba through fabulous decorations of lights that glows in the streets, being best expressed by the well-known Sero Preto or Black hills dwellings in San Nicolas, but it was not always like that.

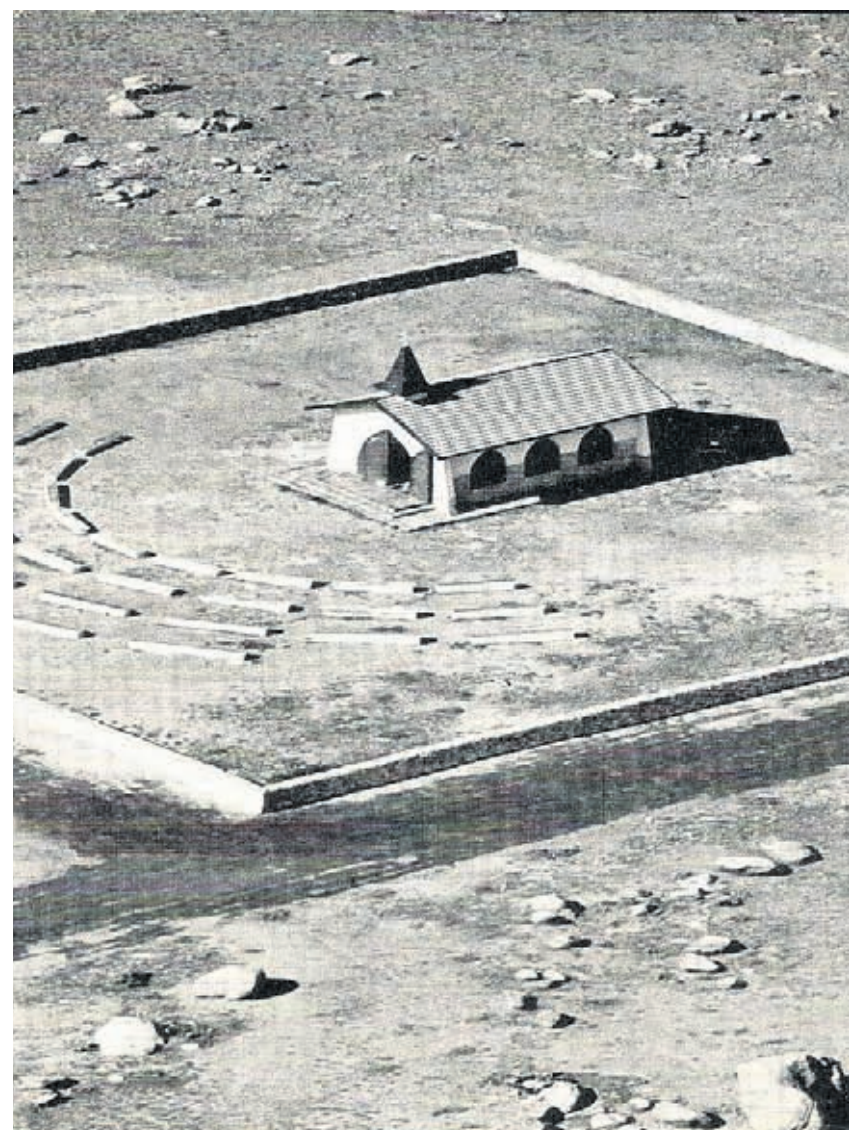


Back in the mid-1700s, there was no electricity; however the people of Aruba were waiting for Christmas with excitement and certain traditions. Weeks before Christmas, the Arubans began cleaning and painting their homes. An old custom was also to tie three aloe leaves with a bright red ribbon and hang that amulet over doors and windows to welcome the spirits of peace and harmony in each home. Typical dishes were enjoyed among the family: Christmas ham, ayaca, goat stew, stuffed turkey and olie bollen(a Dutch tradition). They drank chuculati di panda which is hot milk with peanuts mix and crème punch. Aruba's families went to the Aurora Mass to demonstrate their Christian faith. It called 'Aurora' because it is celebrated at the dawn of the new day. The blessed dawn, the divine sun light of the East that we waited for has appeared and will no longer be hidden in our lives. The cradle of Aruba's Christianity is found at the north coast of the island. This little chapel has a lot of history that attracts many tourists year round and for the Aruban population it's a place for veneration where they find peace and tranquility for their restless spirit.

Among the many stories of this small chapel, there is one that happened during Christmas Eve a quit long time

ago and that reveals the great Christian faith of the Aruban native people. This took place in 1760, in times where Prosecutor Miguel Alvarez ruled. Between the books of the chapel of Alto Vista, a manuscript was obtained whose historical value gives us an idea of the religiosity that occupied the hearts of the native inhabitants of Aruba already at that time. The manuscript mentions that at the end of the year 1760 a neighbor of Alto Vista named Antonio Gregorio, a man of advanced age and a devotee became ill. He was so sick that he understood that it was his last days and felt a great spiritual discomfort because he could die without before first having received the holy sacrament given by the Church. Antonio's greatest wish was to receive the sacraments before he died and he asked his family and friends to pray for this to happen. Antonio's request seemed very difficult to fulfill since there was no priest at Alto Vista at the time. Days passed and his illness progressed. Days before Christmas, Antonio's neighbors and friends gathered to pray in the chapel of Alto Vista. Antonio was getting sicker and sicker he was confident that God would not abandon him and asked the Prosecutor and his friends to prepare Christmas in the best way to fulfill his request.

Continued on Page 15



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PascoanAruban Christmas story of faith

Episode XLVIII - 49



Continued from Page 14

After eighth days of prayer there was no news that any priest could get to meet the request of this ill stricken man. At dawn the next day a group of mounted men arrived in Alto Vista, one of them was

Guillermo, an old neighbor of Alto Vista who years earlier traveled to Venezuela and returned to greet his family. As soon as the inhabitants of Alto Vista confirmed that a priest was arriving in the company of Guillermo they overjoyed with happiness and quickly ran to give

the sick Antonio the great news. The neighbors told the priest, whose name was Maximilian about Antonio's wish and accompanied him to the Sacristy where the priest was able to dress his religious habits. Father Maximiliano and several neighbors went to see the sick man ;the priest confessed to Antonio and promised to give him the extreme unction at dawn the next day to make it a more solemn act. Meanwhile the Prosecutor raised two flags to announce to the inhabitants of Alto Vista that something extraordinary was happening and people began to arrive from all sides for the occasion. The priest greeted everyone with great cordiality, speaking to them of the importance of confession in order to receive the Holy Eucharist (Communion). At twelve o'clock at night, Father Maximiliano gave

his first Mass "Misa di Aurora." At the end of the Aurora Mass, all those present lightened the way with torches and accompanied the priest to Antonio's house. After giving the Holy Oils of the extreme unction to the sick the priest returned to the chapel to prepare the afternoon procession after a few hours someone came running to notify him that Antonio is about to die. The priest and a group of neighbors returned to the house of the dying man and knelt beside him and began to pray. Everyone was around the bed of the dying man and they were surprised to see how the sick man sat on the bed and with his arms outstretched he cried for mercy to God asking him to help him get to his side ... after his request Antonio died in peace on Christmas Mass day. □

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They love Aruba and Aruba loves them



ORANJESTAD — Recently, Kimberley Richardson of the Aruba Tourism Authority had the great pleasure to honor Aruba's loyal and friendly visitors as Distinguished Visitors of Aruba

and Goodwill Ambassadors of Aruba. The Distinguished visitor certificate is presented on behalf of the Minister of Tourism, as a token of appreciation to the guests who visit Aruba 10 years and more consecutively. The Goodwill Ambassador certificate is presented on behalf of the Minister of Tourism, as a token of appreciation to the guests who visit Aruba 20 years and more consecutively.

The honorees were brothers Kaleb & Zach Riddle as Distinguished visitors of Aruba. The Goodwill Ambassador certificate went to couple Larry & Laura Peterson.

These lovely people stated that they love the island very much, especially for its year-round sunny weather, nice sandy beaches and picturesque sunsets, delicious variety of foods, its

safety, and Aruba's warm and friendly people who became like family to them.

Richardson together with the representatives of Renaissance Resort & Casino presented the certificates to the honorees, handed over some presents and also thanked them for choosing Aruba as their favorite vacation destination and as their home-away-from-home. □





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A garden full of strong trees and dressed up in New York-style industrial-look elements creates a cosmopolitan vibe while at the same time the tropical breeze and outside dining connect to the Caribbean.

Waiters with French barrettes and pant suspenders service you with a happy and loose style with on the background the sounds of underground chill music varied with French classics.


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PRESENTS

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SPORTS



Baltimore Ravens tight end Mark Andrews (89) scores a 39-yard touchdown during the first half of an NFL football game against the Cleveland Browns, Sunday, Dec. 22, 2019, in Cleveland.

Associated Press

Ravens clinch AFC's top seed by beating Browns

by Associated Press

CLEVELAND (AP) — Lamar Jackson threw three touchdown passes — two to tight end Mark Andrews late in the first half — and rushed for 103 yards as the Ravens won their 11th straight game, 31-15 against the Cleveland Browns on Sunday to lock up the conference's top seed and home-field advantage throughout the playoffs.

The Ravens (13-2) shook off a sluggish start and avenged their last loss, a 40-25 to the Browns on Sept. 29.

But Baltimore looks nothing like the team it was three months ago as the marvelous, multi-dimensional Jackson has taken the league by storm with his arm and legs.

Jackson finished with 238 yards passing and went over 100 yards for the fifth time this season.

Continued on Page 22



MILE HIGH

Nuggets beat LeBron-less Lakers 128-104 for 6th win in row

Los Angeles Lakers forward Anthony Davis dunks against the Denver Nuggets during the first half of an NBA basketball game Sunday, Dec. 22, 2019, in Los Angeles. The Nuggets won 128-104.

Associated Press
Page 21



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AP source: Ryu, Blue Jays agree to \$80 million, 4-year deal

By MIKE FITZPATRICK

Hyun-Jin Ryu is headed north of the border to a Toronto Blue Jays team in dire need of starting pitching. One that was willing to pay for it, too. Ryu and the Blue Jays agreed to an \$80 million, four-year contract, according to a person familiar with the negotiations. The person spoke late Sunday night on condition of anonymity because the deal was pending a physical after Christmas and had not been announced.

Ryu was 14-5 with a major league-best 2.32 ERA for the Los Angeles Dodgers last season. He started for the National League in his first All-Star Game and finished second in Cy Young Award voting to New York Mets ace Jacob deGrom. The 32-year-old left-hander from South Korea receives a \$20 million salary each of the next four years, with no signing bonus. His deal raised agent Scott Boras' total to more than a billion dollars in guaranteed contracts — \$1,016,500,000 to be exact — for seven players eligible for free agency since the start of November, agreements extending as many as nine seasons.

Boras previously negotiated deals for pitchers Gerrit Cole (\$324 million), Stephen Strasburg (\$245 million), Dallas Keuchel (\$55.5 million) and Tony Watson (\$3 million); third baseman Anthony Rendon (\$245 million) and infielder Mike Moustakas (\$64 million).

Toronto is building around a promising young core of hitters, including three sons of former big league stars who broke into the majors last season: Vladimir Guerrero Jr., Bo Bichette and Cavan Biggio. Looking to surround

them with some proven pitching, the Blue Jays are set to add Ryu to the top of a revamped rotation that should also include newcomers Tanner Roark and Chase Anderson. Roark signed a \$24 million, two-year deal last week with Toronto, which finished fourth in the AL East at 67-95 last season. Anderson, also a right-hander, was acquired from Milwaukee last month. The moves follow Toronto home attendance declining from nearly 3.4 million in 2016, when the Blue Jays lost in the AL Championship Series for the second straight year, to 1.75 million last season — the club's lowest since 2010.

Pitching was certainly a problem: No starter won more than six games for the Blue Jays this year, and the rotation ranked 22nd out of 30 teams with a 5.25 ERA. Ryu, who turns 33 in March, spent his first seven years in the majors with the Dodgers after coming over from South Korea and signing a \$36 million, six-year contract before the 2013 season. He was effective the first two years but sat out the 2015 season and made only one appearance in 2016 due to left shoulder surgery and elbow tendinitis. He also missed time in 2017 with injuries to his left hip and foot.

Ryu re-emerged with a 1.97 ERA over 15 starts in 2018 and accepted a \$17.9 million qualifying offer from Los Angeles for 2019. He threw 182 2/3 innings in 29 starts this year for the NL West champions.

Boras is also likely to land lucrative deals in free agency this winter for outfielder Nicholas Castellanos, and in salary arbitration for sev-

eral stars — including 2018 AL MVP Mookie Betts.

"One hundred and thirty-five people in Boras Corp. work very hard for players," Boras said in a text message to The Associated Press. "Free agency is an achievement few players ever reach, and I am honored to work for these talented players." □



In this Oct. 6, 2019, file photo, Los Angeles Dodgers starting pitcher Hyun-Jin Ryu throws to a Washington Nationals batter during the first inning in Game 3 of a baseball National League Division Series in Washington.

Associated Press



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Flames score 3 power-play goals, beat Stars 5-1

DALLAS (AP) — The Calgary Flames overpowered the Dallas Stars.

Matthew Tkachuk, Sean Monahan and Mikael Backlund scored power-play goals and Calgary beat the Stars 5-1.

Elias Lindholm assisted on the Flames' first three goals. "They're getting some nice chemistry," Flames interim coach Geoff Ward said of Tkachuk and Lindholm. "The power play looked like it did for long stretches of last year. The key thing for us tonight was that the puck movement was quick and on the tape."

Tkachuk's 14th goal of the season broke a 1-1 tie in the second period. Monahan also scored in the second. Backlund's goal in the third period preceded a short-handed, empty-net goal by Derek Ryan.

Lindholm noticed the chemistry with Tkachuk, who had two assists.

"The last five or six games,



Calgary Flames goaltender David Rittich (33) plays the puck in front of his net during the first period of an NHL hockey game against the Dallas Stars, Sunday, Dec. 22, 2019, in Dallas.

Associated Press

I think we've played well," Lindholm said. "It's a good feeling and he's a good player. Just get open, keep building chemistry, and we'll be fine."

Tkachuk agreed,

"(Lindholm's) an easy guy to play with," he said. "He can make some great plays, too."

The three power-play goals were also the most allowed

by the Stars' penalty killers this season.

"Our penalty kill has won us a lot of games. It cost us a game tonight," Dallas interim coach Rick Bowness said, "but it wasn't the only reason we lost tonight. We scored one goal."

The Stars were without key penalty killers for four of Calgary's five power plays. Mattias Janmark didn't

play after the first period because of a lower-body injury and other penalty killers were in the penalty box for two goals.

"We're just out of synch," Bowness said. "(Janmark's) gone, (Radek Faksa's) in the box, (Andrew Coglianov's) in the box. That's our penalty killers."

Flames goalie David Rittich made 26 saves and picked up his first career assist on Backlund's goal.

Andrew Mangiapane scored Calgary's first goal in the opening period. Denis Gurianov countered 38 seconds later for Dallas.

Stars goalie Ben Bishop had 25 saves. The Flames had been 0-2-1 in their previous three games. They are now 7-2-1 under Ward.

Dallas has lost three of four and is 3-3-1 with Bowness coaching.

Mangiapane took a pass in the slot from Lindholm from behind the net and scored on a shot past Bishop at 12:11 of the first period.

Gurianov beat Flames defenseman Noah Hanifin and skated in on Rittich for a wrist shot into the upper right corner of the net.

Dallas had the first eight shots on goal in the second period, including three in a span of nine seconds in the first minute.

Travis Hamonic had the Flames' first shot 8:02 in, a wrist shot stopped by Bishop. That began a stretch of 10 straight shots, including the goals by Tkachuk at 12:28 and Monahan, on a play similar to Mangiapane's goal, at 14:21.

COYOTES 5, RED WINGS 2

DETROIT (AP) — Clayton Keller had two goals and an assist to lead Arizona past Detroit.

Carl Soderberg, Taylor Hall and Christian Dvorak also scored for Arizona. Coyotes defenseman Oliver Ekman-Larsson had three assists and Nick Schmaltz added two. □

Raptors use biggest rally in franchise history to beat Mavs

By The Associated Press

TORONTO (AP) — Kyle Lowry had 32 points and 10 assists, Chris Boucher scored a career-high 21 points and the Toronto Raptors overturned a 30-point deficit to beat the Dallas Mavericks 110-107 on Sunday, the biggest comeback in franchise history and the NBA's largest in a decade.

Lowry had one fewer point in the fourth quarter (20) than the Mavericks managed as a team (21). It was the first 30-point comeback in the NBA since Sacramento beat Chicago on Dec. 21, 2009, according to the Elias Sports Bureau.

Rondae Hollis-Jefferson scored 18 points and Fred VanVleet had 10 as the short-handed Raptors won their fifth straight and improved to 13-3 at home, ending the Mavericks' seven-game road winning streak.

Kristaps Porzingis had 19 points and 12 rebounds and Jalen Brunson scored 21 points as Dallas dropped to 2-2 without guard Luka Doncic, who sat for the fourth straight game because of a sprained right ankle.

NUGGETS 128, LAKERS 104

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Paul Millsap scored 21 points and Denver dominated the second half in defeating LeBron James-less Los Angeles for its sixth straight win.

Gary Harris added 19 points, Nikola Jokic had 18 points, Malik Beasley had 16 points and Will Barton III had 14 points and a career-high-tying 13 rebounds for the Nuggets, who pulled away to a 23-point lead early in the fourth.

James missed his first game of the season because of a thoracic muscle strain. That left the Lakers without his 25.8 point average.

With James looking on in street clothes, Anthony Davis did his best to make up for it with 32 points and 11 rebounds. He scored 11 points playing all 12 minutes of the first quarter.

Kyle Kuzma was the only other Laker in double figures with 16 points, having returned after missing five games with a sprained left ankle. Western Conference-leading Los Angeles lost its third in a row.

THUNDER 118, CLIPPERS 112

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) — Shai Gilgeous-Alexander matched his career high with 32 points and Oklahoma City rallied to beat the Clippers.

Oklahoma City came back from 18 points down in the second quarter. It's the third time in seven days the Thunder overcame a deficit that big to win.

Paul George scored 18 points in his first game back in Oklahoma City since being traded from the Thunder to the Clippers.

Los Angeles scoring leader



Toronto Raptors guard Patrick McCaw (22) goes up to shoot as Dallas Mavericks forward Kristaps Porzingis (6) defends during first-half NBA basketball game action in Toronto, Sunday, Dec. 22, 2019.

Associated Press

Kawhi Leonard sat out because of left knee soreness. Dennis Schroder scored 28 points and Steven Adams added 20 points and 17 rebounds to help the Thunder win their fourth straight.

Lou Williams scored 22 points for Los Angeles, and Montrezl Harrell had 18.

BUCKS 117, PACERS 89

MILWAUKEE (AP) — Giannis Antetokounmpo had 18 points, 19 rebounds and nine assists, and the Bucks spoiled Malcolm Brogdon's return to Milwaukee.

Wesley Matthews scored 19 points for NBA-leading

Milwaukee, which has won three in a row. Brook Lopez and George Hill each had 17 points.

Brogdon was drafted by Milwaukee and spent his first three seasons with the Bucks before he was acquired by Indiana in a sign-and-trade deal over the summer. He finished with 10 points on 5-of-19 shooting and 10 assists.

CELTICS 119, HORNETS 93
BOSTON (AP) — Jayson Tatum had a career-high 39 points and 12 rebounds, Kemba Walker scored 23 points against his former

team, and Boston beat Charlotte.

Tatum eclipsed his previous high of 34 points against Brooklyn on Jan. 14. Jaylen Brown added 16 points and nine rebounds, and rookie Grant Williams added 12 points off the bench for the Celtics. Boston has won three straight and seven of nine.

Devonte' Graham had 23 points and 10 assists, Bismack Biyombo scored 18 and Miles Bridges 15 to lead the Hornets. Charlotte has dropped three straight and four of five. □

Celtics' Kanter thanks Trudeau for chance to play in Canada

Boston Celtics center Enes Kanter says he will be able to play in his team's Christmas Day game in Toronto against the Raptors after discussions with the Canadian government.

In a column published Monday by The Globe and Mail, the native of Turkey thanked Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's government as well as other officials from Canada and the U.S. for getting him the green light to cross the border to play in the NBA's first Christ-

mas game in Toronto.

Kanter, an outspoken critic of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's government for its treatment of residents, has not traveled outside the United States for years. Kanter has said his passport was revoked by the Turkish government in 2017.

The Globe's headline reads, "Thank you, Canada, for letting me play basketball — despite Turkey's threats against me." The Celtics already were short-handed

at center with Vincent Poirier and Robert Williams nursing injuries.

Kanter, 27, is averaging 7.8 points and 7.3 rebounds for the Celtics this season.

"I want to thank Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's government, U.S. and Canadian law enforcement, U.S. Senator Ed Markey, the Celtics, the NBA and my managers for working diligently to make my Christmas game against the Raptors possible and ensuring my safety there," Kanter writes



Boston Celtics' Enes Kanter (11) shoots against Charlotte Hornets' Bismack Biyombo (8) during the first half of an NBA basketball game in Boston, Sunday, Dec. 22, 2019.

Associated Press

in the Globe. "And, on Christmas night, I will play in my first game as a Celt-

ic outside the U.S. when I take the court against the Raptors." □

Continued from Page 18

The Ravens did suffer an injury that could hurt their playoff hopes as running back Mark Ingram went down without being touched in the fourth quarter. Ingram immediately grabbed his lower left leg and collapsed when he tried to stand. Ingram, who went past 1,000 yards rushing in the second quarter and caught a 12-yard TD pass from Jackson in the third, was able to walk to the sideline to be evaluated before limping to the locker room.

The Browns (6-9) were officially eliminated from the postseason, and now first-year coach Freddie Kitchens may be down to his last game. Kitchens has appeared overwhelmed at times and the home finale was a microcosm of this disappointing season as the Browns underperformed and will miss the playoffs for the 17th straight season.

Eagles 17, Cowboys 9

PHILADELPHIA — Eagles cornerback Sidney Jones broke up Dak Prescott's fourth-down pass to Michael Gallup in the end zone with 1:15 left and Philadelphia denied Dallas a division crown.

The Cowboys (7-8) would have clinched their second straight NFC East title with a win in Philadelphia. And they would have eliminated the Eagles (8-7). The Eagles need to win their final game next week at the Giants to clinch the East. The Cowboys can still win the East with a win next week against Washington and an Eagles loss to the Giants. The difference between a division title and missing the playoffs could determine the fate of Dallas coach Jason Garrett.

Playing with a sore right shoulder, Prescott attacked the Eagles cornerbacks on the final drive and had Dallas in position to possibly tie the game until Jones made the clutch stop.

Carson Wentz was 31-for-40 for 319 yards and a touchdown, and Miles Saunders ran for a score to keep the Eagles' playoff hopes alive. Prescott finished 25-for-44 for 265 yards. Two-time rushing champion Ezekiel Elliott, who had averaged 114.8 yards rushing in five



Cincinnati Bengals wide receiver Tyler Boyd (83) stretched for a touchdown as Miami Dolphins defensive back Nik Needham (40) is unable to defend, during the second half at an NFL football game, Sunday, Dec. 22, 2019, in Miami Gardens, Fla.

Associated Press

games against the Eagles, was held to 47 yards.

Cardinals 27, Seahawks 13

SEATTLE — Kenyan Drake rushed for 166 yards and two touchdowns, Larry Fitzgerald added a 21-yard TD reception, and the Cardinals stymied Russell Wilson and the injury-depleted Seahawks.

The Seahawks (11-4) saw their hopes for the No. 1 seed in the NFC potentially vanish with another late-season loss to the Cardinals. Seattle can still claim the NFC West with a win next week against San Francisco, but will need major help to earn total home-field advantage after entering the week as the top seed in the NFC.

Drake had an 80-yard TD run in the first quarter and provided the capper with a 3-yard TD with 4:18 remaining to take a 27-13 lead. Drake's 166 yards were a season high against Seattle.

The question now is Seattle's health going into next week. Seattle faced the Cardinals without four key starters: left tackle Duane Brown, safety Quandre Diggs, cornerback Shaquill Griffin and defensive end Jadeveon Clowney. The Seahawks depth was thinned further when starting running back Chris Carson went down with a hip injury early in the second quarter and backup C.J.

Prosise suffered an arm injury only a few minutes later. Arizona (5-9-1) lost No. 1 overall draft pick Kyler Murray to a hamstring injury midway through the third quarter.

Brett Hundley took over for Murray and the backup QB in Seattle last year led Arizona on a key scoring drive midway through the fourth quarter capped by Drake's second touchdown run. Hundley had a critical 14-yard scramble on third-and-2 to get Arizona into field-goal range.

Wilson finished 16-of-31 for 169 yards, but was sacked five times — four by Chandler Jones, who also forced a key fumble early in the second half.

Saints 38, Titans 28

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Drew Brees threw for 279 yards and three touchdowns and Alvin Kamara ran for two TDs as the Saints kept their chase of the NFC's No. 1 seed alive by rallying from a 14-point deficit.

The Saints (12-3) had to win after San Francisco beat the Rams 34-31 on Saturday night.

They scored 24 straight points to keep alive their chance at one of the NFC's top two seeds and a first-round playoff bye going into their regular-season finale at Carolina.

Pro Bowl wide receiver Michael Thomas also set the NFL record for most catch-

es in a season. The Saints receiver needed 10 to tie Pro Football Hall of Famer Marvin Harrison's mark of 143 catches in 2002. Thomas finished with 12 catches for 136 yards, his last reception a 2-yard TD with 2:10 left for a 38-28 lead.

The Titans (8-7) still have a shot at the AFC's final playoff berth after Houston won the AFC South title Saturday by beating Tampa Bay. The Jets beating Pittsburgh 16-10 means the Titans must beat the Texans in Houston in the finale to earn their second playoff berth in three seasons.

Jets 16, Steelers 10

EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J. — Le'Veon Bell helped deal his former team's playoff hopes a big blow.

The Steelers (8-7) entered the game controlling their postseason chances and would have clinched a berth with wins in their final two games, but now need some help. Pittsburgh now needs to win next week at Baltimore to stay in the mix. The Steelers also have more injury concerns as running back James Conner, center Maurkice Pouncey and quarterback Mason Rudolph all left with injuries.

Bell ran for 72 yards, including seven on a big third-down play in the fourth quarter, on 25 carries while facing the team with which he spent his first six NFL seasons. After sitting out all last

season in a contract dispute, Bell signed with the Jets (6-9) in the offseason. Devlin Hodges, who was benched earlier in the game after throwing two interceptions, came back in early in the fourth quarter when Rudolph went out with a left shoulder injury. Hodges had a chance to lead the Steelers to a comeback win, but fell short. His deep pass for James Washington on third-and-7 from the Jets 44 was knocked away by Marcus Maye in the end zone. On fourth down, Hodges' pass to JuJu Smith-Schuster fell incomplete in front of a MetLife Stadium crowd that appeared to be at least half-filled by Steelers fans.

Dolphins 38, Bengals 35

MIAMI GARDENS, Fla. — A laughter became a thriller for Miami, and it needed overtime to beat Cincinnati.

Miami gave up 16 points in the final 29 seconds of regulation but regrouped, and Jason Sanders kicked a 37-yard field goal as time expired in overtime.

Andy Dalton threw for 396 yards and four touchdown passes, including three in the final 5:01 of regulation as Cincinnati rallied from a 35-12 deficit.

After the gallant comeback, the Bengals (1-14) settled for clinching next year's No. 1 draft pick. They're assured of at least tying for the worst record in club history; they went 2-14 in 2002.

The Dolphins (4-11) again hurt their chances of landing a franchise quarterback in next year's draft, but rookie coach Brian Flores has repeatedly said he's all-out to win now. Rebuilding Miami has four victories in the past eight games with a ragtag roster. Miami's Ryan Fitzpatrick threw for 419 yards and four scores, including one to rookie defensive tackle Christian Wilkins. Each team punted twice to start the extra period before Fitzpatrick led a 10-play, 51-yard march for the winning score.

The stadium was mostly empty when the Bengals cut the deficit to 35-27 with 29 seconds left on Dalton's TD pass and 2-point conversion throw. □



Norway's Rasmus Windingstad celebrates on the podium after winning an alpine ski, men's World Cup parallel giant slalom, in Alta Badia, Italy, Monday, Dec. 23, 2019

Norway's Windingstad wins parallel GS event for career first

ALTA BADIA, Italy (AP) — Norway's Rasmus Windingstad won a men's World Cup parallel giant slalom night race on Monday for his first career victory. Windingstad defeated Stefan Luitz of Germany by 0.41 seconds in the final of the event, which sees two competitors race side-by-side on identical, shortened giant slalom courses, with run times just over 20 seconds. It was his sixth top-10 result, and second podium finish, since coming runner-up in a regular giant slalom in

Kranjska Gora, Slovenia, last season. Windingstad became the fifth different winner in the five parallel GS events held in Alta Badia since 2015, after Kjetil Jansrud, Cyprien Sarrazin, Matts Olsson and Marcel Hirscher. Roland Leitinger of Austria beat Windingstad's Norwegian teammate Leif Kristian Nestvold-Haugen for third place. Pinturault could have become the first male Alpine skier to win a World Cup race in six of the seven different disciplines. □

Clijsters targets March return 7 years after retiring

BRUSSELS (AP) — Kim Clijsters plans to make her delayed comeback to tennis at the Monterrey Open in March, more than seven years after her second retirement. Clijsters said on Monday she accepted wild cards into the Mexican hard-court event which begins on March 2, followed by Indian Wells from March 11, then the Charleston clay tournament from April 6. The former No. 1 and four-time major champion, who already is a member of the International Tennis Hall of Fame, announced her comeback attempt in September. Her plans were delayed in November when

she tore a ligament in her right knee. "I am really pleased with my progress and it's been great to get back on the court and play tennis again," Clijsters said in a statement. "It's been a setback but has really shown me how determined I am to return to the game I love." WTA rules allow her, as a past Grand Slam champion, to receive unlimited wild-card invitations to tournaments and, as someone who is older than 30, to opt out of mandatory appearances at certain events. The 36-year-old Clijsters left the tour in 2007 and got married and had the first of her three children. □



Chair of the Compliance Review Committee (CRC) Jonathan Taylor speaks during a press conference after the WADA's extraordinary Executive Committee (ExCo) on the Russian doping data manipulation, in Lausanne, Switzerland, Monday, Dec. 9, 2019.

Associated Press

AP Interview: WADA lawyer defends no blanket ban on Russians

By **ROB HARRIS**
AP Sports Writer

LONDON (AP) — Expelling all Russians from the Olympics would have been disproportionate and risked being overturned in court, according to the lawyer facing mounting criticism for overseeing a World Anti-Doping Agency decision not to impose a total ban on Russia for a fresh cover-up.

Jonathan Taylor, who chaired a WADA committee that determined the punishment announced Monday, told The Associated Press in an interview that only banning Russia's flag, name and anthem from major sports competitions "was the appropriate line to draw."

WADA ruled that Russian athletes will still be able to compete at international sports events if they can show they are clean and not implicated in a state-sponsored doping scheme. However, Taylor also said the punishment should not lead to the moniker "Olympic Athlete from Russia" being used in Tokyo like it was at the 2018 Winter Olympics.

The WADA executive committee on Monday rejected calls led by its athlete committee chair, Beckie

Scott, for a complete prohibition on Russians from competing after Moscow was found to have tampered with doping data as recently as January. A British member of the athlete panel quit on Thursday in protest, with former Paralympic rower Victoria Aggar saying WADA prioritized "politics over principle."

"Should it have been stronger? Well, I would say ... it was the appropriate line to draw," Taylor told the AP on Thursday.

"You should not punish innocent athletes. So it's not as if there's some overwhelming voice that says, 'No you've got this completely wrong.'"

Russia could still appeal the decision to the Court of Arbitration for Sport. If that leads to a lengthy legal battle, the punishment could be pushed back to cover the 2024 Paris Olympics instead of the Tokyo Games.

"If they drag it out so that it doesn't cover Tokyo, it will cover Paris," Taylor said. "They have to decide which we want to do, which athletes they want to suffer."

The tampering of data happened when Russia was meant to be on the path to cleaning up its act after sanctions were im-

posed that saw some Russians barred from competing at the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Summer Games and 2018 Pyeongchang Winter Games.

"We have to be careful as well, because those who say it should be blanket ban ... it'll be thrown out in court," said Taylor, who chaired WADA's compliance review committee. "We have to focus on what happened in 2018 and '19. That was the cover up of the cover up of the original doping."

Russia, which spent \$50 billion-plus on hosting the 2014 Sochi Olympics, is now banned by WADA from hosting major sporting events.

"The idea that somehow this is a weak proposal, I just don't accept," Taylor said. "Russia will feel the pain from those consequences. ... Anyone who says to me Russia doesn't care about this, this is a sham, they laugh this off — I don't accept them."

But the ban on hosting events does not impact St. Petersburg staging four games at the 2020 European Championship and the 2021 Champions League final, because European soccer body UEFA is not bound by the ruling. □

Report: Popular UAE chat app ToTok a government spy tool

NEW YORK (AP) — A chat app that quickly became popular in the United Arab Emirates for communicating with friends and family is actually a spying tool used by the government to track its users, according to a newspaper report.

The government uses ToTok to track conversations, locations, images and other data of those who install the app on their phones. The New York Times reported, citing U.S. officials familiar with a classified intelligence assessment and the newspaper's own investigation.

The Emirates has long blocked Apple's FaceTime, Facebook's WhatsApp and other calling apps.

Emirati media has been playing up ToTok as an alternative for expatriates living in the country to call home to their loved ones for free.

The Times says ToTok is a few months old and has been downloaded millions of times, with most of its users in the Emirates, a U.S.-allied federation of seven



In this Oct. 27, 2013 file photo, a worker looks at his mobile phone at the newly opened Al Maktoum International Airport in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

Associated Press

sheikhdoms on the Arabian Peninsula.

Government surveillance in the Emirates is prolific, and the Emirates long has been suspected of using so-called "zero day" exploits to target human rights activ-

ists and others.

Zero days exploits can be expensive to obtain on the black market because they represent software vulnerabilities for which fixes have yet to be developed.

The Times described ToTok

as a way to give the government free access to personal information, as millions of users are willingly downloading and installing the app on their phones and blindly giving permission to enable features.

As with many apps, ToTok requests location information, purportedly to provide accurate weather forecasts, according to the Times. It also requests access to a phone's contacts, supposedly to help users connect with friends. The app also has access to microphones, cameras, calendar and other data.

A security expert who said he analyzed the app for the Times, Patrick Wardle, said that ToTok "does what it claims to do" as a communications app, which is the "genius" of the app if it is being used as a spy tool. "No exploits, no backdoors, no malware," he wrote in a blog post. The app is able to gain insights on users through common functions.

In a blog post Monday, ToTok did not respond directly to Sunday's Times report, but said that with "reference to the rumors circulated today about ToTok," the one goal of the app's creators was to create a reliable, easy-to-use communications platform. □

Researcher: Data on 267 million Facebook users exposed

By **FRANK BAJAK**
AP Technology Writer

A Ukrainian security researcher reported finding a database with the names, phone numbers and unique user IDs of more than 267 million Facebook users — nearly all U.S.-based — on the open internet. That data was likely harvested by criminals, said researcher Bob Diachenko, an independent security consultant in Kyiv.

The database, which Diachenko discovered with a search engine, was freely accessible online for at least 10 days beginning Dec. 4, he said. He notified the internet provider where it was hosted when he found it on Dec. 14; five days later it was no longer available.

Diachenko said someone downloaded the database to a hacker forum two days before he dis-



In this Aug. 11, 2019, file photo an iPhone displays a Facebook page in New Orleans.

Associated Press

covered it so it may have been shared among online thieves.

He first reported the finding Thursday in partnership with the U.K. tech news website Comparitech, which editor Paul Bischoff said has been helping write up Diachenko's discoveries of unsecured databases for about a year.

The researcher provided the AP with a 10-record sample from the database and the IDs — and two phone numbers that were answered — checked out against real Facebook users.

The evidence suggests the data was collected illegally, most likely by criminals in Vietnam who may have

"scraped" it from public Facebook pages or by somehow obtaining privileged access to the service. Scraping is automated data-harvesting done by bots. A small fraction of the database include details on Vietnam-based users.

Diachenko said he did not share the database with Facebook, which did not directly confirm the finding. In a statement, the social network said it was investigating the issue and that the finding "likely" involved information obtained before Facebook took unspecified data-protection measures in recent years. In 2018, the social media giant disabled a feature that allowed users to search for one another via phone number following revelations that the political firm Cambridge Analytica had accessed information on up to 87 million Facebook

users without their knowledge or consent.

Diachenko said he had not determined when the data was collected. He said all the records had time stamps from January to June 2019 but that it was unclear who generated them. Security experts say the affected Facebook users are at higher risk of being targeted by spam, password-stealing phishing attacks and identity theft attempts. The information can be cross-referenced with physical and email addresses and other data obtained in other data breaches. Facebook user IDs are unique numbers associated with individual accounts.

In September, the news site TechCrunch reported that Facebook IDs and phone numbers for more than 400 million users were similarly found exposed online by a researcher. □

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Champagne and shoes: Luxury stores adapt to changing shopper

By ANNE D'INNOGENZIO

NEW YORK (AP) — To get that monogram tote bag by Louis Vuitton or leather Flashtrek sneakers by Gucci, the go-to place had been luxury department stores.

Not anymore. Now, there are far more options to access exclusive labels. You can buy them at online sites like Netaporter. Or get them barely used through sites like Fashionphile and The RealReal. You can even rent an entire rotating wardrobe through companies like Rent the Runway. "The consumer is king. And they can buy luxury brands in different places," says Steve Sadove, former CEO and chairman of Saks Fifth Avenue and now senior adviser a MasterCard.

The new entrants have disrupted the luxury sector by creating different channels to attain the seemingly unattainable. For luxury department stores that once had a lock on where the well-heeled could shop, that has forced them to reimagine their approach. They now offer new services as well as food and alcohol to lure back customers who were once exclusively theirs.

At Nordstrom's women's flagship in Manhattan, for instance, customers sip champagne and nibble on small bites while trying on shoes. Recognizing the growing popularity of second-hand sites, Neiman



In this Tuesday, Nov. 26, 2019, photo shows customers shopping in the shoe department at the Nordstrom NYC Flagship in New York.

Associated Press

Marcus is rolling out shops where customers can sell their designer belongings as part of a partnership with Fashionphile, an online resale accessories company. And as part of a \$250 million renovation of its flagship store in Manhattan, Saks Fifth Avenue has dedicated its main floor to luxury handbags that's staffed with 50 handbag style advisers, in addition to sales associates.

Meanwhile, brands like Gucci and Louis Vuitton are opening more of their own stores and expanding online. Robert Burke, a luxury consultant, says they are trying to control their future

as they watch their products get discounted on resale sites.

Joseph Aquino, president of real estate services firm JAACRES, sees luxury's future with fewer stores that focus on "less product" and "higher prices."

In one sense, traditional luxury stores are no different than other brick-and-mortar retailers that must now fiercely compete with online rivals. But the exclusivity they used to command by catering to a niche market of wealthy spenders is beginning to erode, especially among the new-moneyed set of shoppers in their 20s through their 40s who can

afford high-end merchandise but may still be looking for a deal.

Millennials and Generation Z accounted for 47% of luxury consumers in 2018 and for 33% of all luxury sales worldwide in 2018, accord-

ing to a study by consulting firm Bain & Co. Together, however, they contributed to virtually all of the market's growth, compared with 85% in 2017.

Overall, the global market for personal luxury goods is healthy, buoyed by a strong economy and the spending power of China. The sector reached a record high of \$286.53 billion (260 billion euros) in 2018 — a 6% increase from the year before, according to Bain. Jewelry in particular has been one of the top luxury growth categories.

In the U.S., luxury sales excluding jewelry have fallen 1.9 % through November compared to a 3.4% increase in overall retail sales excluding autos and gas, says MasterCard SpendingPulse, which tracks sales across all types of payments. That's in part because of store closures and a drop in international tourists.

Luxury shoppers like Sabina Gill present challenges to luxury department stores. □



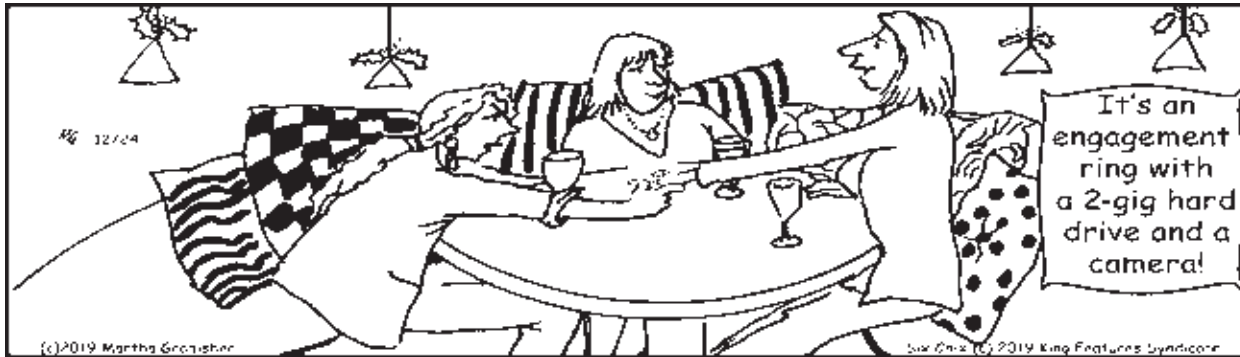

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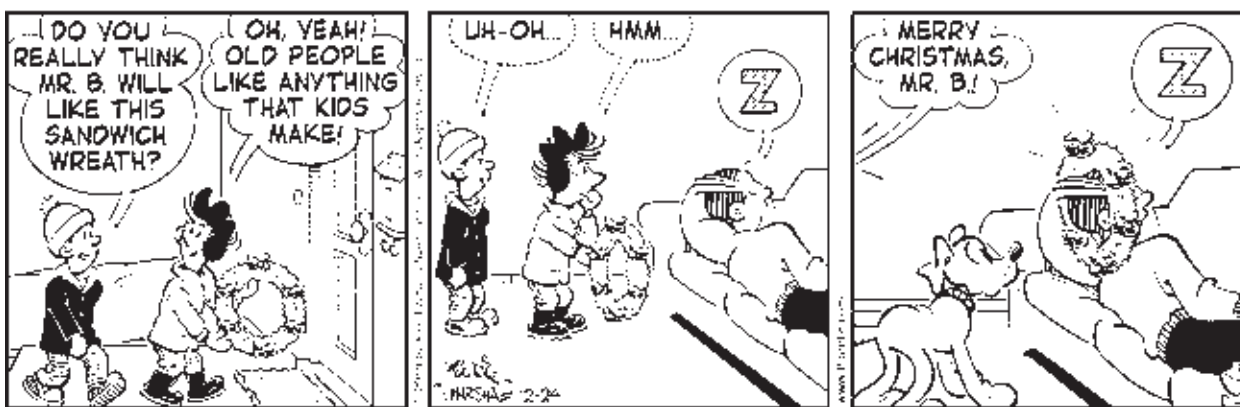
Mutts



6 Chix



Blondie



Mother Goose & Grimm



Baby Blues



Zits



Conceptis Sudoku

		5			6			
3		7			8			
		2					9	
2		1			5		8	
6	8			1			4	7
	7		8			5		3
	5					9		
		3			8		5	
1				2				

Difficulty Level ★★

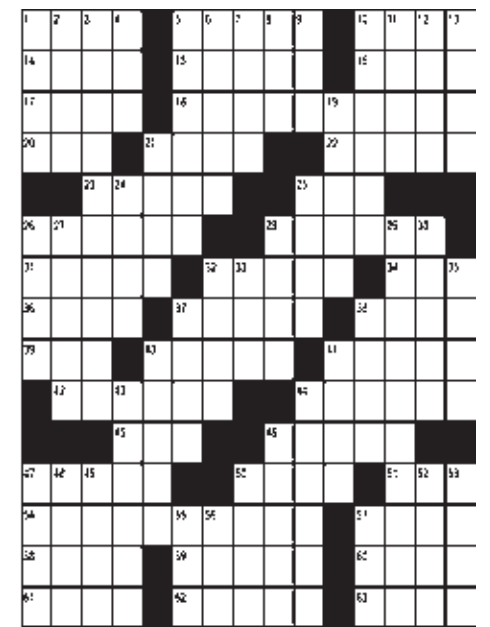
12/21

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Sunday.

Yesterday's puzzle answer

5	6	8	7	4	3	1	2	9
7	2	9	6	5	1	3	4	8
3	1	4	2	8	9	6	5	7
1	4	5	3	2	8	9	7	6
2	7	3	9	1	6	5	8	4
8	9	6	4	7	5	2	1	3
4	3	7	5	9	2	8	6	1
6	5	1	8	3	7	4	9	2
9	8	2	1	6	4	7	3	5

- ACROSS**
- Reginald's provincial annt.
 - Say something
 - Women's, for short
 - Pine or palm
 - Therefore
 - Kag
 - TV show award
 - Explorer globe-trotter
 - Letter from Greece
 - Free-haw
 - Back street
 - Verdless
 - Tear
 - UFO pilots
 - Two-colored horses
 - Tenets, attracts
 - Regal decree
 - Berline, to friends
 - Be without
 - Have no trust
 - Game similar to polo
 - Actor Brynner
 - Prepares to take a seat
 - Brings on board
 - Deodorant brand
 - Look out!
 - Padres National Forest
 - depressive: bipolar
 - Trembling tree
 - Family members
 - 2000 pounds
 - Columbia or Come!
 - Sleazy nightclub
 - Toy with a la'
 - Val vessel
 - Think
 - contemplate
 - Asersk
 - Vike or Cocyte
 - Transmit



Created by Jacqueline E. Mathews

12/24/19

Monday's Puzzle Solved

TRIO	AJAR	POLO
EARNS	CATE	AVIO
AGREE	TRANSCEND	
MEAT	TWO	OPINES
TATER	WON	
PAIRED	SNOOPS	
EMOTE	TAKEN	RAP
RUNS	RIGID	TOTO
USA	SOLES	SOFAS
ELAPSE	FAMINE	
LIE	FILET	
ESTEEM	INA	APT
CHARLATAN	DEBRA	
HALT	REIN	SALON
ODES	YAMS	REDS

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12/24/19

DOWN

- Star case part
- Gives a weapon to
- Rainbow's shape
- Door opener
- Stock purchases
- Rite a Schwinn
- 1 of the 7 deadly sins
- Part of a royal flush
- Gritley Jr.
- Carve a statue
- Actor James Jones
- Northern J.S. Indian tribe
- Nimble
- Conflamate
- Hat dog holders
- Have a strong smell
- Wealthy
- Friendly nation
- Mauritius
- Holes in the ground
- Hyper
- Less nuts
- Oregon-to-New York direction
- Penish
- Mistake
- Enemies
- Stra oval fruit

- Lyngdal
- Chick producers
- Shrend
- Spraying tree
- Slogan
- Dying birds
- In a suking
- Bread for a gyro
- Gentlemen
- Horzoni
- app ance
- Bookish le low
- One not to be trusted
- sauce: temyak
- mandarin
- and don't
- ru es

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Divi Dutch Village \$1995 or BO
Divi Village wks 17 Studio 4/25 24 weeks left \$1800 BO
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Ocean/Pool View
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from:03/22/20-03/29/20(3)
:03/20/20-03/27/20(2)
; 02/21/20-02/28/20(4)

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2-BR OceanView \$15,5K
2-BR OceanSide \$16,5K
2-BR OceanFront \$26K
3-BR OceanView \$28K

Marriott SurfClub

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WK51 OceanView \$39K
WK52 OceanView \$49K
WK51&52 OceanFront
\$160K:bothweeks
looking to buy
2 BR wk 52 ocean front or ocean side

Marriott OceanClub

PlatinumSeason
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2-BR OceanView \$16,5K
2-BR OceanFront \$26K
Divi Link Golf
For Rent 2020 1 BR wk 3 \$2200
La Cabana 1 BR wk 3 \$1800
GoldSeason
1-BR OceanView \$4K
2-BR OceanView \$9K

ArubaDiviPhoenix

2-BRPH WK49 &50
building7/ 7thfloor
32weeks on each \$24K each
2-BRPH WK #1
building6 / 7 thfloor
28weeks \$30K

ArubaDiviPhoenix

2 BR WK 50
building6/3rdfloor
33weeks \$22K
1-BR/WK#2
building8/groundfloor
32weeksremain \$16K

DiviLinksGolf

1-BR WK51 \$12,5K
Birdie 1 with 26 weeks
2BR WK51 \$24K
Birdie 1 with 26 weeks
'1-BR WK#1& 2
Birdie 9 with 30 weeksremaining
on each \$10K each
Studio WK#2 \$7,5K
eagle 3 with 23 weeks
'1-BR WK#3 \$9K
eagle 3 with 23 weeks

La Cabana Beach Resort

2BR E unit wk 49 /50ocean front
grond floor \$15 K each

DiviLinksGolf

2 BR/WK# 3 \$22K
Eagle 8 with 25 weeks
DiviVillage
studio/wk#1 \$7K
buildingC with 34 weeks

DutchVillage:

studio wk#52 \$7500
17weeks 9 accelerated
DiviLinksGolf
\$7,500
Studio wk#1 building4
24-weeks 8-accelerated

DiviLinksGolf

1-BR WK#4 \$8K
birdie-1 with 20 weeks
studio/wk#5 \$8,000
birdie-4 with 28weeks

EagleResorts

3-BR wk#51 \$25K
1-BR wk#51&52 \$25K
bothweeks

La CabanaBeachResort

Thursday check-in 4thfloor
1 BR wk 51 \$9000
4th floor thursday check
1-BR wk#52 \$8,5K

La Cabana Beach

sunday check in
1 BR wk 49
2sd floor \$5,5 K
1 BR wk 50
3rd floor \$5,5 K

Renaissancesuites

1-BR wk#51 \$9K
5thfloor/harborview
CPV Resort

1 Br wk# 52 \$7000
1 Br wk# 3/4 \$6000 each
2 Br wk# 5/6 \$7000 each

House Forsale

TierraDelSolGolf
3-BR , 2-Bath \$520 K
Ponton upscale houses close to town
10min drive from major beaches
4 BR , 2 bath , Pool, \$370 K

Le Vent

*Condo near Eagle Beach

3-BR, 2-Bath , \$650 K
propertyland (commercial)
41,000 sq feet \$60 ,per sq feet
propertyland near town
6000 sq feet \$850 K

DiviVillage

5th-floor building-C
25weeks remain on each
1-BR wk#1 \$8,500
Studio/wk#1 \$7,500



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Scientists claim to find ancient seawall off Israeli coast

HAHOTRIM BEACH, Israel (AP) — An international team of researchers says it has discovered a 7,000-year-old-seawall along Israel's Mediterranean coast, providing evidence that coastal communities protected themselves against rising waters even in ancient times.

The scientists believe the more than 100-meter-long (110-yard-long) structure acted as a fortification against surging waters and storms. The study, published Wednesday in the Public Library of Science One journal, said the Neolithic era village, called Tel Hreiz, was abandoned and eventually swallowed by the sea.

"Here we have an example, a practical example of a process that is still going on. We can see a whole community which are now under the sea," said Ehud Galili, lead researcher and archaeologist from Israel's Haifa University.

The researchers believe the structure was built by villagers out of riverbed boulders found several kilometers (miles) away. The site lies just south of the northern Israeli port city of Haifa.

While seas were rising at a faster rate during the Neo-



This photo provided by Ehud Galili shows what researchers say is 7,000-year-old-seawall along Israel's Mediterranean coast.

lithic period than they are today, the causes were much different, according to co-author Jonathan Benjamin from Flinders University in Australia.

"There's a big difference between climate change and prehistory which was naturally occurring, and climate change now, which is due to this huge human in-

tervention," Benjamin said. Still, similar to contemporary coastal communities, Benjamin said the villagers of Tel Hreiz had to make "the very human decision" to stay or go as the coastline receded. The ancient settlement was first exposed in the mid 1960s and re-covered by thick sands. After winter storms along

the coast in 2012 and 2015 moved these sediments, the structure was uncovered. Archaeologists have also dug up pottery, animal and human remains that, based on carbon dating, are believed to be from the same settlement.

The community, Galili said, was an "early Mediterranean fishing village" which

relied on farming, animal husbandry and exploitation of the land and sea. During the excavations, they also found early examples of olive oil extraction.

At first, researchers considered the possibility that the wall was built for other reasons like agriculture or protection from attackers. But Galili said that during this period, enemies would have come from land and not the sea. He also said there was no sign that the wall extended around the village to defend against land invasions. He concluded the wall "has no other function possible" except to protect against the elements.

Researchers say the seawall itself — found about 120 meters (130 yards) off the coast — is the only structure of its kind found in Israel's coastal region, making it a "unique example" of the human response to the threat of shrinking coastlines in the Neolithic period. Roland Gehrels, a physical geographer at Britain's University of York who specializes in sea-level studies and was not involved in this study, called the discovery a "fascinating find." He said, □

Associated Press



In this 2019 photo provided by the University of Iowa, Professor Russell Ciochon holds a cast of a Homo erectus skull at his lab in Iowa City.

Associated Press

Scientists narrow age estimate for fossils of human ancestor

NEW YORK (AP) — Scientists say they have finally calculated the age of the youngest known remains of Homo erectus, which is generally considered an ancestor of our species.

The fossilized skull fragments and other bones were uncovered on the Indonesian island of Java in the 1930s. Determining their age has been a scientific challenge, and a wide range has been proposed by numerous studies.

In a report released Wednesday by the journal Nature, scientists conclude the remains are between 108,000 and 117,000 years old. Researchers used five dating techniques on sediments and fossil animal bones from the area, com-

bing 52 age estimates for the analysis. The project took 13 years to complete. "I don't see any way to date this site more thoroughly," said paleoanthropologist Russell Ciochon of the University of Iowa, an author of the study.

H. erectus arose in Africa about 2 million years ago and spread widely there and in Asia, and possibly into Europe. It reached Java more than 1.5 million years ago, and the new dates suggest it died out at least 35,000 years before the arrival there of our own species, Homo sapiens.

H. erectus may have been doomed on Java by climate change that turned its open woodland environment into rain forest, Cio-

chon said. Still, it evidently existed longer on Earth than any other species on our "Homo" branch of the evolutionary tree.

Susan Anton, a New York University anthropologist who did not participate in the work, called the dating effort "heroic." But she said she considered the reported age range to be too narrow. She said she preferred a span of less than 550,000 years old to more than 100,000 years old.

That's roughly what she and co-authors proposed in a paper published in 2011. The younger end of the range in that paper was as recent as 120,000 years, which she said is virtually the same as the new result. □

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Times Square characters head to Rock Center for the holidays

By **SABRINA CASERTA**

NEW YORK (AP) — Visitors headed for Times Square have long been bedazzled by thick crowds, bright lights, and a cadre of costumed characters who sidle up to tourists, pose with them for pictures, then persistently pressure them for tips.

Complaints about the sometimes aggressive behavior of the performers prompted the city in 2016 to pass a law relegating the Times Square characters to 8-by-50 foot "activity zones" where they might annoy fewer people.

Now, with the holiday season in full swing, some of the costumed superheros, Muppets and Disney characters have headed to the equally crowded environs around Rockefeller Center and its iconic Christmas tree.

The scene on a recent weekend was a familiar one, though absent the activity zones that keep the characters penned in.

"All right, smile," one dad said as he snapped a pic-



In this Thursday, Dec. 19, 2019 photo, people snap pictures with familiar costumed characters, who solicit money to perform for the photos in Times Square in New York.

Associated Press

ture of his two girls standing with Minnie and Mickey Mouse on Fifth Avenue.

After he pulled out his wallet and handed over a few dollar bills, he was greeted by grumbling from Mickey that this wasn't enough,

because there were two characters in his picture, not one.

Ed Saverino, of New Jersey, brushed by the characters on his way to see the tree as someone else politely declined a photo opportunity.

"Don't do it!" Saverino shouted. "It'll cost you \$100." "I'm from around here," Saverino said. "So I know the deal. These guys are predatory. If you wanna take pictures with people,

then let them come to you. Don't go running up to people and touching them."

After a Times Square Elmo was arrested in September for grabbing a 14-year-old girl's buttocks as she posed for a photo with him, Mayor Bill De Blasio promised stricter enforcement to ensure harassment wouldn't happen again, but didn't outline how he'd do so.

On a recent Sunday, three Minnie Mouses and one Mickey Mouse character roamed the sidewalks outside Rockefeller Center. Each politely declined to be interviewed.

Some passersby defended them as harmless and fun.

"I work down here, right by Rockefeller Center, and I think they should be allowed to take pictures wherever they want," said Jen Radin, who was accompanied by her son and daughter. "Maybe not during the week because it forms crowds, and it's already hard enough to walk around here. But on the weekends, I don't see a problem." □

Mexican wrestlers thrill public at historic Metro station

By **AMY GUTHRIE**

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Tinieblas, one of the grandmasters of Mexican wrestling, looked on from a stage over the weekend as lucha libre wrestlers put on a free show for spectators at the open air plaza of Metro Insurgentes.

The young men donned studded collars, devil horns, masks and —of course— tight pants as they hurled insults, kicked one another in the chest and swung legs like pendulums around opponents. The high-risk theatrics were far more dangerous than when Tinieblas began his wrestling career in 1971, but the enthusiastic cheers and jeers of the crowd sounded the same. Taking wrestling to the streets on a day of leisure struck Tinieblas as brilliant, since some fans lack the time or economic means to see a match in an arena. "Right now, with the lucha

libre that they are seeing, they purge their sadness, their unhappiness — so many things," he said from behind a golden mask with black mesh over his face. Tinieblas, who is 80, conceals his identity even though he is retired from wrestling. His wrestling moniker means "darkness."

"Lucha libre is a therapy. Instead of yelling at the missis when they arrive home, or at the mother-in-law, they arrive calm. They already yelled at the wrestlers," he added with a chuckle.

The display on the concrete esplanade of one of Mexico City's first Metro stations was put on by an arts foundation called LuchArte to commemorate 50 years of the city's heavily trafficked subway system.

This particular station is ringed with concrete walls meant to evoke pre-Hispanic architecture, with the city's tallest office tow-



Mexican wrestler Relampago Veloz encourages the crowd during a "lucha libre" fight in Mexico City, Saturday, Dec. 21, 2019.

Associated Press

ers looming within eyeshot of the base of the sunken plaza. The colorless plaza served as a bleak backdrop for a shootout scene in the 1990 science fiction film "Total Recall," starring Arnold Schwarzenegger.

"I think that without the Metro, the city would be chaos," LuchArte founder Iliana So told the crowd be-

fore the wrestling began on Saturday.

Annual ridership of the Mexico City subway system tops 1.6 billion in a sprawling metropolitan area with 22 million inhabitants. The lines span 140 miles (226 kilometers), making the capital's subway one of the most extensive urban rail networks in the world.

Like riding the Metro, indulging in a lucha libre wrestling match is a quintessentially Mexican pastime. It's the second most-followed sport in the country, after soccer.

"Mexicans identify with lucha libre because Mexican culture is very colorful," said So, alluding to the bright colors of the wrestlers' costumes as well as their flair for the dramatic.

The bravado on display over the weekend included a five-woman match filled with grunts, slaps, chest pumps, body locks and flips. An Aztec princess in fishnet stockings took on the bad girls with the help of a little person whose hits and punches drove the crowd wild.

"C'mon little one!" cheered a spectator as children chanted "Again, again!" every time the blonde woman with dwarfism entered the ring. □



This image released by Warner Bros Pictures shows Jamie Foxx in a scene from "Just Mercy."

Associated Press

Jordan and Foxx shine in urgent drama 'Just Mercy'

By **MARK KENNEDY**
Associated Press

There's usually one film that tops lists whenever powerful legal thrillers are debated — "To Kill a Mockingbird," set in the 1930s. Now comes a film showing how little has changed since then, based on a murder in the same Alabama town where Harper Lee wrote her masterpiece.

"Just Mercy" is the real story of civil rights attorney Bryan Stevenson and his fight to keep an innocent black man from being executed. It is urgent, searing and powerful, led by a first-rate cast. Though it portrays events more than 25 years ago, it is very much a film of 2019.

Michael B. Jordan portrays Stevenson, who founded the Equal Justice Initiative, a legal organization that has successfully challenged the death row convictions of more than 130 inmates.

Earlier this year, he was the subject of HBO's film "True Justice: Bryan Stevenson's Fight for Equality."

Stevenson has been a dogged fighter for justice, someone Archbishop Desmond Tutu once called "America's Mandela." When Starbucks was faced with a racially charged uproar over the arrest of two black men at one of its stores in Philadelphia, it

turned to Stevenson for advice.

The film follows one of his first cases, that of Walter McMillian, a black pulpwood worker sentenced to death for the 1986 fatal shooting of an 18-year-old white woman. Stevenson was able to prove that a key witness had lied and prosecutors withheld important evidence.

McMillian is played by Jamie Foxx and it is his best work in years, raw, soulful and honest. Tim Blake Nelson, as the key witness, also turns in a stunning performance, as does Rob Morgan playing a death row inmate. Brie Larson as Stevenson's assistant is unflashy and strong. Jordan is the calm, quiet anchor of the film, his kind eyes radiating pathos.

In a pivotal scene, Foxx's character asks Stevenson why a Harvard-trained attorney has come down to the South and risked violence to do this legal work. "I know what it's like to be the shadows," Stevenson responds. "That's why I'm doing this."

Destin Daniel Cretton directed the film from a screenplay he co-wrote with Andrew Lanham, based on Stevenson's best-selling 2014 memoir. Stevenson is also an executive producer, and that ensures he's illuminated in the best

light.

So if there's one weakness in the film, it's that it sometimes veers into hagiography. The naturalism of the cinematography and acting sometimes clashes with dialogue that seems overly polished.

"I just want to help people," Jordan says at one point. "I just have to figure out how." In another scene, Foxx declares to his attorney: "I got my truth back. You gave that to me."

The film at times follows other great courtroom dramas that build to a emotional conclusion such as "My Cousin Vinny" and "A Few Good Men" but "Just Mercy" has larger and deeper social issues constantly swirling, including criminal justice reform, the death penalty and racial profiling. If ever there was an example of how film can slide from entertainment to advocacy, this is it.

With the exception of Larson and a young corrections officer, no white characters come across as anything but venal and Alabama is portrayed as a place where African Americans are "guilty the moment you're born." While it ends on a happy note, you cry for all those generations of people railroaded into a cell. "Just Mercy" is not always an easy film to watch, but it is necessary. □

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Busy Philipps says her family likes spontaneous travel

NEW YORK (AP) — Busy Philipps and her screenwriter husband, Marc Silverstein, jet around the world a lot with their two daughters, ages 6 and 11, and often don't have much time to plan ahead.

"My husband and I have always been spontaneous travelers because of the way that our jobs work. We never know and can schedule things aside from big holidays," the actress told The Associated Press in a recent interview.

With the holiday travel sea-

son upon us, the "Freaks and Geeks" star is encouraging parents not to be afraid to book a last-minute family getaway. She's promoting the HotelTonight travel app, which offer discounts on last-minute accommodations.

Just make sure the whole family is on board with the idea, she says.

"My friends who have kids are always asking, isn't that more stressful? But it's not. It's better in a weird way because your expectations are lower and you're kind

of like all in it together," she said. "It becomes a family adventure and the kids really get into it."

As for traveling with kids, her advice is: Be prepared, bring snacks or even whole meals, and don't be too tough on activities.

"We have no limits on screen time on an airplane or in a car trip," she said. She tries to encourage other things, like card games or coloring, but if the kids just want to watch movies, "I'm like, 'OK, that sounds fun. Great.'" □

Saudi Arabia cuts loose with bevy of models and a rave

By AYA BATRAWY

DIRIYAH, Saudi Arabia (AP)

— Supermodels and social media mavens, their make-up artists and hair stylists in tow, posed at a concert in leather pants, chunky sweaters and trendy black combat boots. What was unusual about these Instagram posts was that they were all deliberately tagged in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

The bevy of Instagram stars, former Victoria's Secret models, including Alessandra Ambrosio, and Hollywood actors like Ryan Phillippe, Ed Westwick and Wilmer Valderrama were invited to Saudi Arabia over the weekend to promote the kingdom's most eye-popping effort yet at showcasing the dramatic changes taking hold in this country, where more than half of its 20 million citizens are under 25 years old.

The efforts are aimed at boosting the economy while polishing Saudi Arabia's image abroad and appealing to the young. It's a staggering pivot from just three years ago, when religious police would storm restaurants playing music and harass women in malls for showing their face or wearing red nail polish.

Now, the kingdom has movie theaters and concerts. Women are allowed to drive and travel without male permission, and they can sit with men, un-



In this Saturday Dec. 21, 2019 photo, people attend a concert, part of the MDL Beast Festival, a three-day musical extravaganza in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

Associated Press

segregated at restaurants. The kingdom began issuing tourist visas this year. Female visitors are not required to wear the conservative black-flowing robe known as the abaya and headscarves in public.

At Riyadh airport, a booth welcomes tourists with pamphlets on etiquette in Saudi Arabia, labeled "Our Code of Conduct."

"Both men and women are asked to dress modestly in public, avoiding tight fitting clothing," it explains. "Women should cover their shoulders and knees in public." Apparently, not all the V.I.P. guests flown to Saudi Arabia on private jets got the

memo — some opted for stomach-baring bralettes under open coats.

The blast of glossy social media posts helped draw attention to the visit's purpose — to promote MDL Beast, a three-day musical extravaganza in Riyadh that drew more than 130,000 visitors on its first day alone, according to the General Entertainment Authority. Ticket prices started at just 75 riyals (\$20), but organizers were eager to ensure a big turnout so tickets were also handed out for free to some government employees.

More than 70 world-renowned DJs were invited to

perform across five stages to the backdrop of surrealist performances — including one with a woman in a skintight sky blue leotard writhing from a hot air balloon over a crowd of young Saudi men.

Men and women cut loose and danced at the unprecedented rave-like event. Thousands waited for hours to get in.

A popular social media account, Diet Prada, named and shamed some of the celebrities present, accusing them of allegedly accepting six-figure sums for attendance and geo-tagged posts to "rehabilitate the image of Saudi

Arabia."

Earlier this year, hip-hop star Nicki Minaj pulled out of performing in the kingdom over concerns about women's rights, gay rights and freedom of expression. When asked by The Associated Press, the entertainment authority that licensed MDL Beast said some people had been compensated for promoting the event, but denied such high sums were paid to individuals.

While the social changes ushered in by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman have been sweeping, so too is his crackdown on criticism and political expression. The prince has overseen the country's war in Yemen, which has led to the world's worst humanitarian crisis, and the arrest of women's rights activists, clerics and writers.

He's also drawn international condemnation for the killing of Saudi writer and Washington Post columnist Jamal Khashoggi in Turkey, slaughtered by Saudi agents inside the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul last year.

The incident tarnished Prince Mohammed's international image though his popularity is undeniable at home.

The fully veiled Hassan said she wasn't raised on this kind of entertainment, but has no problem with her kids enjoying it. □

Whoo's there? Georgia family discovers owl in Christmas tree

ATLANTA (AP) — A Georgia family got a real hoot from its Christmas tree: More than a week after they bought it, they discovered a live owl nestled among its branches.

Katie McBride Newman said Friday that she and her daughter spotted the bird on Dec. 12. They had bought the 10-foot (3-meter) tall tree from a Home Depot, brought it back to their Atlanta area home and decorated it with lights and, coincidentally, owl or-

naments.

"It was surreal, but we weren't really freaked out about it," McBride Newman said. "We're really outdoorsy people. We love the wilderness."

The family opened windows and doors near the tree hoping the owl would fly away, but it didn't.

"The owl seemed to be pretty comfortable, and I thought, 'Hey buddy, it's not going to go well if you just stay here. There's no food, I'm sorry,'" said Mc-

Bride Newman's husband, Billy Newman.

So the family called a non-profit nature center for help. The Chattahoochee Nature Center caught the bird and helped the family release it.

McBride Newman said she believed the bird had been in the tree since they bought it, but was hidden. "We think he was just in there hugging the trunk," she said. "It's a very dense tree and it was very fresh. That's why we picked it." □



This photo provided by Billy Newman Photography shows an owl nestled in a Christmas tree that belongs to Katie McBride Newman in Newnan, Ga.

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